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ABSTRACT

An authorized course of instruction for the Quinmester Program in Dade County (Florida) public schools is given for study of Norwegian dramatist and social critic Henrik Ibsen. The course includes an introduction to four dramas which reveal that man's dream of perfection can sometimes lead to destruction, sterility, and estrangement from life. Works to be studied include "Brand," "The Wild Duck," "Ghosts," and "Hedda Gabler." Performance objectives include the examination of the forces which influenced Ibsen, the role of the dramatist as realist and satirist, major themes of each play, and symbolism emphasizing the themes. The course content is outlined briefly, followed by detailed suggestions for teaching strategies to fulfill the class objectives. Specific discussion areas are given for each play. Both student and teacher resource materials are also listed. (LH)

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AUTHORIZED COURSE OF INSTRUCTION FOR THE



LANGUAGE ARTS

Henrik Ibsen - Critic of Society

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HENRIK IBSEN — CRITIC OF SOCIETY

5114. 152 5115. 167 5116. 174

English

Written by M. Paul Rice and Clifford G. Singleton for the DIVISION OF INSTRUCTION Dade County Public Schools Miami, Florida 1972



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COURSE NUMBER

COURSE TITLE: HENRIK IBSEN — CRITIC OF SOCIETY

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: An introduction to four great dramas which reveal that man's dream of perfection can

5115. 167 dramas which reveal that man's dream of perfection can 5116. 174 sometimes lead to destruction, sterility, and estrangement

from life. Works to be studied include Henrik Ibsen's

Brand, The Wild Duck, Ghosts, and Hedda Gabler.

I. PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

- A. Given background material, the student will examine the forces which influenced Ibsen's writings.
- B. Given selected dramatic works by Ibsen, the student will explore the role of the dramatist as realist and satirist.
- C. Given four plays by Ibsen, the student will discuss critically the major themes of each play.
- D. Given four plays by Ibsen, the student will recognize symbols which emphasize his theme.

II. COURSE CONTENT

Aristotle's conception of art and drama, that is, that it is "an artistic imitation of nature" most certainly motivated Henrik Ibsen, the Norwegian playwright and father of modern drama.

Ibsen, who fostered realistic drama, gave to the world some of its most significant literature. His greatest contribution was to assume the role of social critic. The attacks he launched on the clergy, public officials, the Victorian notions of propriety and duty, and the nineteenth century views of marriage and the role of women have helped to shape modern drama and literature. Met with outrage and public indignation, Ibsen continued throughout his career to examine issues of concern which he felt were in need of reform but which others hesitated to touch.

The student will examine issues which confronted men in the nineteenth century; issues, some of which are still unresolved; issues which continue to be debated and discussed. An examination of Brand,



The Wild Duck, Ghosts and Hedda Gabler will reveal the dramatic talent and critical slant of Ibsen.

III. TEACHING STRATEGIES

- A. Given background material, the student will examine the forces which influenced Ibsen's writings.
 - 1. Screen English Literature: The Victorian Period as an introduction to Victorian ideas.
 - 2. Give a lecture on Victorianism so that the student will develop a better understanding of the times about which Ibsen wrote.
 - 3. Have students read an essay or background material on the Victorian age.
 - 4. Have students investigate the type of theatre which was most popular with Victorian audiences.
 - 5. Present a lecture on the moral tone and the need for social reform in the nineteenth century.
 - 6. Have students present oral reports on Victorian art, literature, architecture, mores, dress, religion, conditions of workers, Marxism, Darwinism, Freudianism, romantic ideal, science versus religion, political figures, or philosophers.
 - 7. Show students filmstrip What is Drama?, Part I, which outlines the history of drama.
 - 8. Present lecture on Ibsen the man and the dramatist.
 - 9. Have students pursue independent reading on the history of drama in Norway and the condition of the theatre in the midnineteenth century.
 - 10. Have the students trace the significant events in the life and career of Ibsen.



- 11. Present film, lecture or speaker to illustrate the life and customs of the Scandinavian countries.
- 12. Have students do library research on a period of Ibsen's life, Norway, the Norwegian theater, and other related topics.
- 13. Have resource person speak on physical changes of the theatre from ancient to modern times and the particular changes which came about in Ibsen's time.
- 14. Like Shakespeare, Ibsen's writings were limited by the physical structure of the theater. Have students explain how these writers overcame these limitations.
- 15. Have students investigate Ibsen's involvement in political and nationalist movements as a young man.
- 16. Have students discuss Ibsen's belief that it is the right of the individual to pursue freedom and happiness regardless of conditions in society.
- 17. Have students present a panel discussing those elements in modern society which Ibsen might attack and hypothesize his position.
- 18. Have students read a biography of Ibsen and in a research paper discuss what elements in his plays are autobiographical.
- 19. Have students investigate Norwegian artists who were contemporaries of Ibsen such as Grieg.
- 20. Have students listen to selections from the works of Edvard Grieg.
- 21. Present speaker or lecture to outline the development of the French theatre which influenced Ibsen.
- 22. Have students read a literary work by Scribe, Hauptman, Bjornson or Oehlenschlager, to report orally how they influenced Ibsen's writings.



- 23. Have students research the reception of Ibsen's works by the Norwegian audiences and critics.
- 24. Have students construct a set design to be used for one of Ibsen's plays.
- 25. Have students construct a model or drawing of Ibsen's theater.
- 26. Have students write an annotated paper on some aspect of Ibsen's work or influence on later playwrights.
- 27. After reading Ibsen's plays and other pertinent information, ask students to write a paper on the importance of Ibsen to modern drama and the theatre in the areas of development of realistic drama, the perfection of stage craft, or the emergence of characters as real people.
- B. Given selected dramatic works by Ibsen, the student will explore the role of the dramatist as realist and satirist.
 - 1. Have students read Oedipus the King and contrast the classical and modern conception of the tragic hero.
 - 2. Have students analyze the structure of a classical Greek play.
 - 3. Give students selected dramatic works by Ibsen to identify the classical influences in his works such as the structure of his plays and the concept of the tragic hero.
 - 4. Have students research the influence wielded by the middle class in the late nineteenth century.
 - 5. Have students explain the types of people most often satirized by Ibsen and why these types were selected.
 - 6. Have students write a theme to illustrate the relationships between the motivations and actions of a character.
 - 7. Have students research Ibsen's attitudes toward the state church of Norway.

- 8. Have students describe the moral and social evils which Ibsen attacks in his plays.
- 9. In Act IV of An Enemy of the People, Dr. Stockman comments on the changing nature of truth. Ibsen is at this point his most didactic self. Have students read Act IV and discuss the philosophy he presents and apply it to present conditions.
- 10. Have students present a panel to discuss present day social standards in Norway in the areas of religion, sex, family life, etc.
- 11. Have students present a scene from a play.

GHOSTS

- 1. Have students describe the relationship between Regina and Engstrand. Is their relationship ideal or something less? What in Engstrand's comments would lead Regina to believe that Engstrand is not her father?
- 2. Have students describe Pastor Manders. Is he typical of Victorian morality? In exposing Manders what does Ibsen reveal about Victorian morality?
- 3. Have students contrast the moral and social attitudes of Reverend Manders and Mrs. Alving in Ghosts.
- 4. Have students explain what is revealed about the relationship between Manders and Regina and between Manders and Mrs. Alving.
- 5. Ask students to describe how Manders views Oswald Alving.
- 6. Ask students to explain the relationship between Engstrand and Manders. What does this say about Manders' values?
- 7. Have students explain what Manders means by "conscience" and what Mrs. Alving means when she uses it.
- 8. Oswald comments in Act II, "If it were only the illness, I

- should stay with you, Mother." Ask students to explain what prevents him from staying at home.
- 9. Ask students to explain what Oswald means by "the joy of life." What is his mother's reaction to the phrase?
- 10. Ask students to explain the meaning of the phrase "the joy of life" when used by Regina; when used by Mrs. Alving.
- 11. Ask students to explain whether or not there is any resemblance between the "joy of life" Oswald has found in Paris and the "joy of life" his father experienced.
- 12. Ask students to explain how Oswald reacts to his mother's revelation about his father's true nature.
- 13. In the opening of Act III we learn that Manders has been intimidated by Engstrand. Ask students to explain what this reveals about Manders' moral condition at this point in the play.
- 14. At the conclusion of Act II Manders refers to the fire as "a judgment on this house." Ask students to explain what he means. Mrs. Alving says, "I expect you're right, Manders." Ask students to explain her statement as well.
- 15. Ask students to discuss the views of womanhood and mother-hood as presented in Ghosts.
- 16. Ask students to discuss the views of marriage expressed by Ibsen in Ghosts.
- 17. Have students discuss what is artificial and unrealistic about Ghosts.
- 18. Have students write a theme discussing the tragedy of Mrs. Alving's life.
- 19. Have students compare the structure of a classical tragedy with the structure of Ghosts.

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HEDDA GABLER

- 1. Ask students to explain the significance of George Tesman's receiving an honorary doctorate rather than earning the degree.
- 2. Have students explain how the characters Hedda Gabler and Thea Elvstead illustrate contrasting concepts of womanhood.
- 3. Ask students to compare George Tesman and Eilert Lovborg in Hedda Gabler.
- 4. Hedda mentioned several times that she did not love George Tesman. Have students write a paper explaining why they feel she married him.
- 5. Lovborg in his book forecasts the probable line of development in the future. Ask students to explain what George's response, "I should never have thought of writing anything of that sort," reveals about his character.
- 6. Have students explain how Mrs. Elvstead succeeds in molding a human destiny where Hedda fails.
- 7. Ask students to explain why they feel a character such as Hedda Gabler would commit suicide rather than face life.
- 8. Ask students to research the role of women in the nineteenth century and explain why a character such as Hedda Gabler would seem so bold. Compare her with a woman of the twentieth century.
- 9. Have students read St. Joan or Pygmalion by George Bernard Shaw and compare Shaw's women with Hedda Gabler.

THE WILD DUCK

1. Have students discuss the similarities and differences in the father-son relationships of the Werles and the Ekdels in The Wild Duck.



- 2. Have students explore the theme of appearance versus reality by comparing Reverend Manders, Peter Stockmann and Gregers Werle.
- 3. Have students discuss Ibsen's use and view of the artist and his role in society in one of his plays. The following characters could be used: Oswald Alving, Eliert Lovborg, Hialmar Ekdel, or Ejnar.
- 4. Ask students to explain Ekdal's speech in Act II of The Wild Duck about the wounded wild duck: "They shoot to the bottom as deep as they can get, sir and bite themselves fast in the tangle and seaweed and all the devil's own mess that grows down there. And they never come up again." Why does Gregers call Hialmar a wild duck?
- 5. Have students discuss the role of Gina in <u>The Wild Duck</u>. Does she typify women of the nineteenth century?
- 6. Ask students to write a paper explaining how they feel Hedvig's death will affect either her father or her mother, or both.
- 7. Ask students to compare Hialmar in The Wild Duck with George Tesman in Hedda Gabler. What does the playwright suggest that each man lacks?

BRAND

- 1. Have students compare Kierkegaard's philosophy with the Christian philosophy Ibsen calls "all or nothing" in <u>Brand</u>.
- 2. Have a student research Darwin's theory of evolution and the influence it has on nineteenth century Europe, particularly Norway.
- 3. Have students contrast Brand and Ejnar and Agnes at the opening of the play.
- 4. In Act III of Brand the Doctor says to Brand "so merciless



towards your flock, so lenient towards yourself." Have students explain whether or not this proves to be a true statement.

- 5. As in many of Ibsen's other plays there is concern for heredity. What are the effects of heredity and inheritance that Ibsen is interested in?
- 6. Have students discuss Brand's conception of God. Is his conception of God truly consistent with Christian teaching?
- 7. Have students discuss the moral character of the Mayor and the Provost. Was the Mayor justified in lying to save the people of the valley?
- 8. Have students compare the Provost or Dean and Brand.
- 9. In Act IV of <u>Brand</u>, Brand says that to lose everything is to gain all. Have students explain what is meant by this statement, and how it is consistent with the philosophies of Brand and Kierkegaard.
- 10. Have students investigate the condition of humanitarianism in nineteenth century Scandinavia. Why does Brand reject what is "humane".
- 11. Have students explain how the last line of the play, "He is the God of Love," is a denunciation of Brand's idealism.

 What is its effect upon Brand?
- 12. Have students investigate the moral condition of Christian churches and clergy in the nineteenth century. How does Brand measure up?
- 13. Have students contrast Brand with Reverend Manders in Ghosts as members of the clergy.
- 14. In his later work, Ibsen achieves greater realism. Have students explain what in <u>Brand</u> causes it to be less realistic than Ghosts, The Wild Duck, and Hedda Gabler.

- 15. <u>Brand</u> bears a close resemblance to classical tragedy. Examine Aristotle's <u>Poetics</u> and determine the degree to which Brand can be considered classical.
- 16. What constitutes a modern tragic hero is a much asked question. Ibsen attempted in Brand to construct such a modern tragic hero. Have students write a theme defining what Ibsen means by a tragic hero. They might compare his idea with Arthur Miller's "Tragedy of a Common Man."
- C. Given four plays by Ibsen, the student will discuss critically the major themes of each play.
 - 1. Ibsen was concerned with several major themes such as the nature of truth, the artist and truth, illusion and reality, self-realization, freedom and the individual, relation between past and future, and search for the ideal. Have students select one theme and explain how Ibsen presents the theme in more than one play.
 - 2. Outline for students the plot of A Doll's House and screen the film Ibsen's A Doll's House, Parts I and II which discuss a popular Ibsen theme, the destruction of illusion.

GHOSTS

- 1. Ibsen titles the play Ghosts with good reason. Ask students to explain what ghosts exist in the Alving household; in the society which fosters a Manders. To what extent is inheritance responsible for these ghosts? Ask students to discuss the universality of Ibsen's theme.
- 2. In the discussion between Manders and Mrs. Alving concerning her reading habits and his feelings concerning the insurance, one of the major themes of the play is revealed. Ask students to identify the theme. Is Ibsen making comments on the clergy in general? On society in general?
- 3. Oswald Alving is suffering from a fatal disease. Have students explain how Ibsen uses Oswald's physical condition to comment on the moral corruption of the times.



- 4. Oswald Alving, an artist returning from Paris, speaks of "the joy of life." Have students explain what is meant by "the joy of life" and the new awareness of life which Oswald embraces.
- 5. Apparently Mrs. Alving has been successful at concealing her husband's failings. Ask students to explain how this helps develop the theme of the play. In how many ways does Ibsen present this theme?
- 6. Ask students to discuss how Ibsen uses irony throughout Ghosts to underline his theme.
- 7. Ask students to compare the theme of appearance versus reality in Ghosts with the theme of The Wild Duck.

HEDDA GABLER

- 1. At the end of Act II Hedda says, "I want for once in my life to have power to mold a human destiny." Ask students to explain how she attempts to fulfill this goal.
- 2. After reading the play Hedda Gabler ask students to discuss why they feel the playwright titled the play as he did rather than Hedda Tesman.
- 3. The last line of the play <u>Hedda Gabler</u> spoken by Judge Brack is one of the most famous in modern drama. Ask students to explain how "Good God! People don't do such things" emphasizes one of the major themes of the play.

THE WILD DUCK

- 1. Ask students to explain why Relling tells Gregers Werle not to use the foreign word <u>ideals</u> when he talks about the ideals of youth. Why instead does he tell him to use the word lies?
- 2. Have students explain what is meant by the statement "claims of the ideal" as expressed by both Gregers Werle and Hialmar.



- 3. Hialmar, at the end of Act II, says, "The man who has a mission in life must be independent." Explain how he does not typify his statement.
- 4. Ask students to explain why Gregers Werle says he would rather be "an amazingly clever dog; one that goes to the bottom after wild ducks" than himself.
- 5. Have students explain why Hedwig, Hialmar, and Ekdal each calls the wild duck his own.
- 6. Have students explain the role of Gregers Werle as the antagonist in the play The Wild Duck.
- 7. Ask students to explain what Gregers Werle means when he says his destiny is "To be the thirteenth at the table."
- 8. Ibsen is absorbed with the idea of fate as a product of heredity. Have students explain how he presents his theme in The Wild Duck and/or Ghosts.
- 9. Have students discuss the role illusion plays in <u>The Wild</u> <u>Duck</u>. Have students explain how Ibsen develops this theme.
- 10. Have students discuss the idea that the pursuit of the truth is the cause of family disintegration in The Wild Duck.

BRAND

- 1. Have students explain to what extend Brand's account of his childhood in Act II may have contributed to his "all or nothing" philosophy.
- 2. Have students discuss Brand's personal crises: the death of his mother, of his child, of Agnes. Is his reaction consistent with his absolute idealism in each instance. How is each crisis foreshadowed?
- 3. Have students explain Brand's dissatisfaction with the "big church" in Act V.



- 4. In Act V of <u>Brand</u> the Provost states that "The state sees religion as the best means of improving the country's moral tone. The best insurance against unrest." To what extent does this represent the condition of the church in the Middle Ages, in the nineteenth century, in the twentieth century?
- 5. Ejnar returns in Act V of <u>Brand</u> with the news that he has become a missionary in Africa. What irony is there in his statement "My place is with the black souls"?
- 6. Have students discuss the reaction of the people to Brand's insistence that they climb the mountain. One man asks, "What will be my share of the reward?" Another asks, "Will victory be ours by Tuesday?"
- 7. Have students explain the attack Ibsen makes on civil servants in <u>Brand</u>. Discuss the appropriateness of this theme in modern society. To what extent does modern literature make use of this theme?
- 8. Have students list all references to Scripture and explain their significance in Brand.
- 9. What themes does <u>Brand</u> have in common with <u>The Wild</u> Duck? with Ghosts?
- D. Given four plays by Ibsen, the student will recognize symbols which emphasize his theme.

GHOSTS

- 1. Ibsen is very specific in his stage directions where lighting is concerned. Have students explain the significance of the lighting in Act V of Ghosts and in what way it is ironic.
- 2. Ask students to explain what the books Mrs. Alving is reading represent to Manders.
- 3. Ask students to explain the significance of Oswald's recollection of his father's smoking a pipe.

- 4. Have students describe the system of morality which Manders represents.
- 5. Have students explain why it is ironic that the orphanage should burn when it did.
- 6. Have students explain how the fire which destroyed the orphanage in Ghosts is a symbol of truth.
- 7. Mrs. Alving intends to give what money remains after the fire to Engstrand to establish Captain Alving's Haven. Engstrand remarks that he has hopes "it may prove worthy of Captain Alving's memory". Ask students to explain the irony of his statement.
- 8. At the end of Act I, Mrs. Alving introduces the title of the play Ghosts. Ask students to explain the significance of the title.
- 9. Ask students to explain the symbolic significance of Oswald's physical condition.
- 10. Ask students to explain the significance of the Biblical quotation "The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children."
- 11. Ask students to explain the significance of the weather conditions in Ghosts.
- 12. At the close of Act III, Oswald asks for "the sun." Ask students to explain what he means by the statement.
- 13. Ask students to identify the warnings in the play Ghosts.

 What warning is there concerning the erection of monuments to the dead? What lesson is there for the living?

HEDDA GABLER

1. The first two actions of Hedda concern the windows and flowers. Ask students to discuss what kind of relationship this foreshadows between Hedda and Juliana Tesman.



- 2. Have students discuss the symbolic significance of Lovborg's manuscript in Hedda Gabler.
- 3. Have students discuss the symbolic significance of Hedda's pistols in Hedda Gabler.
- 4. Ask students to explain why Hedda at the end of the play gives George the impression that she is with child.
- 5. Ask students to compare the personalities of Hedda and Mrs. Elvsted in <u>Hedda Gabler</u>. The characters symbolize what kinds of women?
- 6. Ask students to explain the symbolic significance of sunlight and the lack of sunlight in <u>Ghosts</u>, <u>The Wild Duck</u> and <u>Hedda</u> Gabler.

THE WILD DUCK

- 1. Have students discuss the many references to sight and blindness in The Wild Duck.
- 2. Have students explain the symbolic significance to old Ekdel of the animals in the garret.
- 3. After reading Act IV of <u>The Wild Duck</u>, ask students to explain why Gregers Werle tells Hedwig to sacrifice the wild duck.
- 4. In the final scenes of <u>The Wild Duck</u>, Relling prefers the use of the word "lies" to "ideals." He further says "Rob the average man of his life's illusion, and you rob him of his happiness at the same stroke." Have students apply the thoughts of Dr. Relling to Hialmar's photographic invention and old Ekdal's attic.

BRAND

1. Have students explain the significance of the setting of <u>Brand</u>? Why is there so much concern that Brand and Agnes leave their small church and go elsewhere?



- 2. Have students explain what is the significance of the ugly little church which is robbed of sunlight?
- 3. Have students explore the significance of the Ice Church to Gerd the gypsy. Have students explain the significance of the hawk to both Gerd and Brand.
- 4. Have students explain to what extent Brand is represented as a Christ figure.

IV. STUDENT RESOURCES

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 Wild Duck, Hedda Gabler, Master Builder) New York:
 Signet-Classic.
- Ibsen, Henrik. <u>Four Major Plays.</u> (A Doll's House, <u>Hedda Gabler</u>, <u>The Wild Duck</u>, <u>Master Builder</u>)
- Meyer, Michael (trans.). Hedda Gabler and Three Other Plays.

 (Pillars of Society, The Wild Duck, Little Eyolf) New York:

 Anchor Books.
- Sharp, R. F. (trans.). <u>Four Great Plays by Henrik Ibsen.</u>
 (A Doll's House, <u>Ghosts</u>, <u>An Enemy of the People</u>, <u>The Wild Duck</u>) New York: Bantam Books, 1959.

Meyer, Michael (trans.). Brand. New York: Anchor Books, 1960.

V. TEACHER RESOURCES

- A. Professional books and materials
 - Bentley, Eric (ed). The Play: A Critical Anthology. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1951.
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Williams, Raymond. <u>Drama from Ibsen to Brecht.</u> New York: Oxford University Press, 1969.

B. Films and filmstrips

Doll's House, A: The Destruction of Illusion,	
Part I	1-40131
Doll's House, A: Ibsen's Theme, Part II	1-31803
Introducing Norway (19' B&W)	1-11947
Scandinavia (16')	1-11939
Scandinavian Lands: Norway, Sweden,	
Denmark (11')	1-04685
This Is Norway (20')	1-11952

What is Drama? 2 filmstrips/2 records

Guidance Associates (24')



