

The Master Builder

Henrik Ibsen

Study Guide

Work with your reading group to answer each of the following questions. Hand in one completed set of answers with each group member's name to receive credit. Groups can be no larger than five—the play can easily be read by three students, so large groups should split into smaller groups. Answers should be thorough and explicit.

Act One

1. What is the relationship between Halvard Solness, Kaja Fosli, Ragnar Brovic, Knut Brovic? How do the employees feel about Halvard?
2. Based on the conversation Halvard has with Dr. Herdel, describe Halvard's relationship with Aline?
3. What does Halvard fear? How does he try to protect himself from his fear?
4. What does Hilda's arrival symbolize? When does she arrive? Why is the date significant to her? Why is it significant symbolically? Where will she sleep? Why has she arrived?

Act Two

1. What events have had a major impact on Aline's life? How have they affected the relationship between Aline and Halvard? As story elements, how do they relate to Halvard's fear?
2. Why does Halvard prefer to build houses rather than churches? What allowed him to begin his career as a builder? How does he feel about that serendipitous event?
3. What does Halvard say was Aline's gift?
4. When Halvard confesses to Hilda why he refuses to comment on Ragnar's work, what character type in which of Frye's mythos does he appear to be? What other elements of the play support this view? For example, are there other characters or plot elements that fit the same mythos?

Act Three

1. What does Aline say were the most painful losses that she suffered?
2. What does Ragnar learn about Halvard from Kaja? How does he feel about Halvard?
3. Why did Halvard climb the tower the first time? Why will he do it again?
4. Why do you think Halvard is so willing to listen to Hilda?

Review

1. The play progresses through three distinct acts. Briefly describe the key aspects of each and explain how they work together to lead to the conclusion.
2. Throughout the play, Solness describes supernatural acts and communication with supernatural beings. Identify a few examples and explain how they influence him.
3. How does Halvard Solness's situation compare with Nora Helmer's?

Norway

Geography

Located in northern Europe, Norway occupies the western and northern portions of the Scandinavian peninsula. It is bordered to the north by the Barents Sea, to the north-east by Finland and Russia, to the east by Sweden, to the south by the Skagerrak Strait and to the west by the Atlantic Ocean, known as the Norwegian Sea. More than three times larger than Iceland, Norway covers a total land mass of 323,900 square kilometres. This includes the volcanic island of Jan Mayen to the north east of Iceland, and a portion of Antarctica lying between longitude 20° west and 45° east, known as Queen Maud Land. Also included is Svalbard, an archipelago which lies between Greenland and the Barents Sea. Norway is a mountainous country, with nearly one-third of the country lying north of the Arctic Circle. From the inland mountains and mountain plateaux, the landscape falls sharply towards a coastline dotted with innumerable islands. The country has traditionally been divided into five principal regions – Nord Norge (North Norway), Trøndelag/Mid-Norge (Trondheim Region/Mid-Norway), Vestlandet (West Country), Østlandet (East Country) and Sørlandet (South Country).

Language

Norway has three official languages, Bokmål, ('Book Language'), Nynorsk ('New Norwegian') and the Sámi language. Sámi is completely separate and only taught in Norwegian schools with Sámi pupils. The most commonly used is Bokmål which is heavily influenced by Danish, used in most written works and spoken by more than 80% of the population, especially those living in urban areas. It is the main language of instruction and broadcasting. Nynorsk was created in the mid-19th century and combines many rural dialects; legislation requires that it must be used in a certain percentage of schools and broadcast media. Around the country some 272 dialects of the Norwegian language continue to be spoken in rural areas. The Sámi minority people of North Norway speak their own languages but also learn Norwegian in school. Although Danes, Swedes and Norwegians can understand each other's languages, only 4 million people in the world speak Norwegian. English is taught in all Norwegian schools and is spoken widely as a foreign language.

Read More at <http://www.culturalprofiles.net/Norway/>

Norway Cultural Profile. 19 Aug. 2007. Visiting Arts Cultural Profiles 17 Feb. 2008. <<http://www.culturalprofiles.net/Norway/>>.