

## BOOK CLUB GUIDE

### *Searching for Nora: After the Doll's House*

By Wendy Swallow

1. In what ways do Norway and America represent different ideals and opportunities for Nora?
2. For Henrik Ibsen (who wrote *A Doll's House*), money and class often figured as traps for independent-minded characters. How does Nora change her perspectives on money and her class? For Solvi, do the expectations of her social class offer greater, or less, opportunity?
3. Nora often finds herself in morally ambiguous situations. Why does this happen to her? How would you describe Nora's morality at the beginning of the novel and at the end? How does her understanding of moral questions change?
4. Nora and Solvi both prevaricate, hold back the truth, or lie outright. How does deception work for women as a tactic? How does lying work for and against these two characters? What must Nora give up to come to terms with her dishonest behavior?
5. How would you characterize Nora as a mother – to her own children and to her stepchildren?
6. Near the end of the book, Nora faces a terrible choice. Would you have made the same choice she does?
7. Nora often talks of “doing things for love.” Do you think she uses that as an excuse for actions that should be taken for other reasons? Do you find yourself making questionable choices “for love” in your own life? In what ways does love lead Nora and Solvi astray?
8. Suicide is a theme in this book, as it was in Ibsen's work. In what ways does suicide appear to Nora as self-sacrifice? Can you identify other novels and operas where a woman takes her own life to solve an untenable situation?
9. What is happiness? How does Nora find happiness in her poverty? How does Solvi find happiness in her work? Are there surprising ways these two put together the elements that make for a happy existence?
10. Loss figures dramatically in both Nora's and Solvi's experiences. How do their losses shape them, for good and bad? How do they deal with the hole in the heart those losses leave behind?