



Hedda Gabler is an iconic play written by Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen that debuted in Munich on January 31, 1891. It is recognized as a classic of realism, nineteenth century theater, and world drama. The title character, Hedda, is considered one of the great dramatic roles in theatre.

***Hedda Gabler* expanded synopsis**

Hedda Tesman is the beautiful daughter of General Gabler, who has died, leaving her without a fortune. Hedda is in her late twenties, and after years of an active social life among society's elite, has recently married Jørgen Tesman, an art history scholar.

When the drama begins, Hedda and Tesman have just returned from a six-month honeymoon and Tesman is hoping to receive a professorship at the university. Tesman spent the time during their honeymoon studying and working as an archivist, but Hedda spent most of the trip bored.

Despite her clear dislike of her husband, Hedda has become pregnant – a fact which she has thus far denied. Berte, the maid, announces the arrival of Thea Elvsted, an old schoolmate of Hedda's. She has come seeking Eljert Lövborg, Tesman's old friend and rival whom she fears will succumb to old vices now that he's back in the big city. Several years earlier, Lövborg had gone on an extended, drunken, debaucherous spree and fell from social grace. Recently, however, Lövborg has been living a secluded life and has written a revolutionary new work in collaboration with Thea. Hedda asks her husband to invite Lövborg over so that they can keep an eye on him. Judge Brack, a friend of the Tesman family who helps manage their finances and has an eye for Hedda, arrives and tells Tesman the unwelcome news that he will face competition for the professorship from Lövborg, who also happens to be one of Hedda's former admirers. Tesman is dismayed, as this development threatens to worsen his already strained financial situation. After Brack's exit, Tesman tells his wife that, to save money, she will have to curtail her social life. Hedda says ominously that at least she has one thing to pass the time with: her father's pistols.

Lövborg arrives and reveals that he has poured his true self into his manuscript, considering it to be like his own child. Lövborg also announces that he will not compete with Tesman for the professorship, to Tesman's great relief. Alone with Hedda, Lövborg reminds her of their very intimate relationship during their adolescence, one she violently broke off after it threatened to develop a sexual dimension. Hedda threatened to shoot Lövborg at the time, but didn't. Lövborg accuses Hedda of fearing scandal and being a coward. Thea, who is deeply in love with

Lövborg, has left her husband in order to follow him, returns to the room. Lövborg praises Thea's beauty and courage, and this inflames Hedda's jealousy. Hedda tempts Lövborg to drink, saying that the other men will think less of him if he doesn't, but Lövborg is firm in his new principles. Hedda then reveals that Thea came to the Tesmans earlier that morning in a state of desperation, fearful that Lövborg would relapse. Knowing Thea has so little confidence in him wounds Lövborg to his soul. He reacts by delivering a grave toast, and then drinks two glasses of alcoholic punch. When Tesman and Brack prepare to leave for a bachelor party, Lövborg announces that, despite Thea's pleas, he's going with them to the party.

Thea passes a sleepless night at the Tesman's home, while Hedda sleeps quite well. Neither Tesman nor Lövborg has returned from the party, and Thea is panicked. Hedda advises her to go into her bedroom and rest. Tesman returns and confesses to being jealous of Lövborg's manuscript and tells Hedda that Lövborg got debauchedly drunk and lost his irreplaceable manuscript, which Tesman later found in the gutter. Tesman says he must return it to Lövborg at once, but Hedda convinces him to leave it in her care.

Upon returning and despite Berte's best efforts, Lövborg enters into a state of confusion and disorder. Thea enters from Hedda's bedroom. Lövborg lies, saying that he tore up his manuscript and scattered it in the river. Thea cries out that this act seems to her as though Lövborg had killed their child. She exits. Hedda neglects to tell Lövborg that she has the manuscript. Lövborg says that his life is hopeless, and he confesses that he could not bring himself to tell Thea the truth about the manuscript — that he lost it. He also reveals his intention to kill himself. Hedda, far from protesting, just asks that he do so "beautifully, with vine leaves in your hair". She tells him to leave and gives him a memento, one of her father's pistols. Once he leaves, Hedda makes the decision and destroys his manuscript.

Hedda confesses to Tesman that she destroyed the manuscript. To assuage her husband's outrage, she insists she did it out of love for him, so that he wouldn't be outshone by a better mind. Tesman is torn between doubt and happiness to learn this news.

Thea enters. She's heard that Lövborg has had some kind of accident. Brack enters soon after and confirms that Lövborg has been fatally shot in the chest. To everyone's shock and alarm, Hedda praises the courage and beauty of his suicide. Tesman is wracked by guilt — Lövborg's manuscript, which would have made its author's name immortal, is now lost to the world forever. Thea says this is not entirely the case, because she is in possession of the notes that Lövborg used to dictate the manuscript to her. On the spot, Tesman and Thea decide to team up and reconstruct Lövborg's work.

Brack informs Hedda that Lövborg's death was not a suicide — he was shot at Mademoiselle Diana's salon, while raving about his manuscript. He was also not shot in the chest, as Brack had previously reported, but rather in the groin. Hedda is disgusted to consider the fact that seemingly everything she touches becomes petty and farcical. Brack reveals that Hedda will be implicated in a scandal when it comes out that Lövborg was shot with one of her pistols. Brack says that no one need know that the pistol was Hedda's, however — so long as he holds his tongue.

When Hedda understands that she is at Brack's mercy, and without purpose in life, she takes out General Gabler's remaining pistol and shoots herself.