

Study Guide written by Sonja Lowe & Marie Frederickson
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Student Matinee Performances

February 16 10:00am
March 1 10:00am

204 N. 85th St. ■ Seattle, WA 98103
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An Enemy of the People



by Henrik Ibsen

Ibsen's fiery drama, *An Enemy of the People*, hit the stage in 1883 and has stirred audience imagination ever since.

The play begins with a startling revelation: the medicinal waters that are the lifeblood of a small Scandinavian town's tourist trade are contaminated, infecting the very people they are supposed to heal. When Dr. Stockmann brings his discovery to the Kirsten Springs Board of Directors, he expects to be hailed as a hero. What he encounters is something quite different. Ibsen's portrait of one man's pursuit of truth is a powerful and passionate plea for the courage to stand alone when honesty and integrity demand it.

Henrik Ibsen 1828 - 1906

Henrik Ibsen was born in 1828 in Skien, a small coastal town of Norway. At fifteen he was apprenticed to an apothecary, but was unsuccessful in that profession. He began writing poems and tragic plays very early in life. Some of his works were produced in Norway, but they received zero recognition abroad. However, in 1864, Ibsen received a modest writer's pension from the government. With this money, he left Norway and settled his family in Italy. There he began to write the plays that would rock the literary society of Europe, and change the face of theatre forever.

Ibsen's

Social Protest Plays

The Pillars of Society (1877)
A Doll's House (1879)
Ghosts (1881)
An Enemy of the People (1882)

Dramas

Cataline (1850)
The Pretenders (1864)
Brand (1866)
Peer Gynt (1867)

Symbolist Plays

The Master Builder (1892)
John Gabriel Bjorkman (1896)
When We Dead Awaken (1900)

Psychological Dramas

The Wild Duck (1885)
Rosmersholm (1887)
Hedda Gabler (1890)

"... and what does it mean, then, to be a poet? It was a long time before I realized that to be a poet means essentially to see, but mark well, to see in such a way that whatever is seen is perceived by the audience just as the poet saw it. But only what has been lived through can be seen in that way and accepted in that way."

Henrik Ibsen,
The Task of the Poet, 1874

Ibsen's Influence for *An Enemy of the People*

Prior to Ibsen, the theatre had a very poor reputation. It was viewed as just entertainment, and lower class entertainment at that. Ibsen wrote plays about ordinary middle class citizens instead of the lords and ladies that had been commonly seen on the stage. His characters candidly discussed current social issues in a manner that was nothing short of revolutionary. Ibsen took a medium that was awarded little respect, and turned it into a literary art form; because of this he is often regarded as the first modern playwright.

Ibsen's new controversial style, however, exposed him to serious condemnation from the press. In particular, *Ghosts* was reviled as being vulgar and immoral. *An Enemy of the People* was conceived in 1882 during this storm of abuse from theatre critics. Writing extremely quickly and entirely in secret, Ibsen responded to those who were offended with a play about a man who dared to say what was unpopular.

In a letter that Spring, Ibsen informed his publisher that he was in the middle of writing a new play. "This time," he commented wryly, "it will be a peaceable production which can be read by Ministers of State and wholesale merchants and their ladies, and from which the theatres will not be obliged to recoil."

Ibsen's prediction proved correct. The Scandinavian theatres eagerly received *An Enemy of the People*. Between January and March of 1883, it was performed in Christiania, Bergen, Stockholm, and Copenhagen. In 1889, it was chosen to represent Ibsen in a series of performances which inaugurated the National Theatre at Christiania. Performed in several different languages and many different countries, *An Enemy of the People* proved to be one of Ibsen's most successful plays.

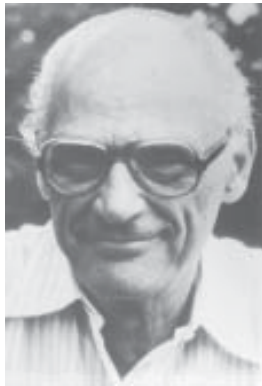


photo from **Henrik Ibsen:
A New Biography**

Adapted by

Miller

Arthur



American playwright Arthur Miller approached *An Enemy of the People* as a project during the McCarthy Era. Miller's adaptation of the play trimmed the dialogue, cut the redundancy, and focused the play on what he felt to be the central theme: "whether the democratic guarantees protecting political minorities ought to be set aside in time of crisis." In a letter to his colleague, Elia Kazan, he confided, "My main interest in [the play] is that through the guise of Ibsen—sssh!—I have managed to say things I wouldn't dare say alone."

When the play opened in New York on December 28, 1950, it was well received by the critics. The New York Times raved, "You can hardly escape the power and excitement of a bold drama audaciously let loose in the theatre by actors and stage people who are not afraid of their strength." The public, however, was less easy to convince. The play was not a financial success and closed after only 36 performances.

"It is necessary that the public understand again that the stage is *the* place for ideas, for philosophies, for the most intense discussion of man's fate. One of the masters of such a discussion is Henrik Ibsen, and I have presumed to point this out once again."

Arthur Miller



Although numerous English translations of the Norwegian play exist, Arthur Miller's vivid 1950 adaptation, brings it to life. Therefore, the halting Victorian era language of the original was replaced with a more potent contemporary interpretation. His fresh approach returned the dangerous edge to Ibsen's drama that was lost by many of the exact translation. British director David Thacker produced many of Miller's plays in London and considered the adaptation a "fantastic marriage between Ibsen and Miller, two great playwrights shaking hands over the century."

"I have attempted to make *An Enemy of the People* as alive to Americans as it undoubtedly was to Norwegians, while keeping it intact."
Arthur Miller

A Successful Town

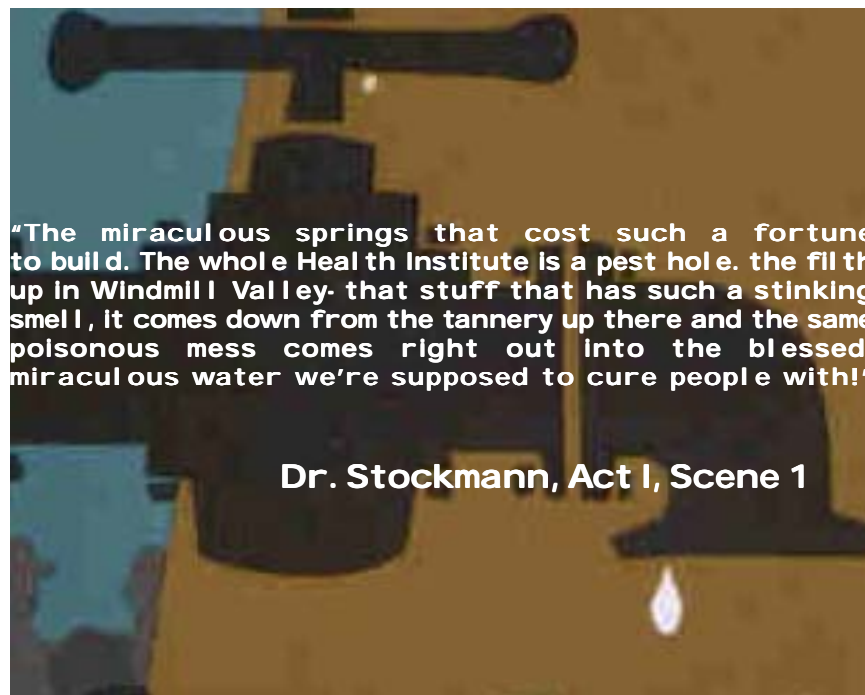
An Enemy of the People is set in a small Scandinavian town in the early 1920s. Kirsten Springs, the health institute in the town, attracts many visitors each year. The town community is built on this business.

“As a matter of fact, I happen to admire the spirit of tolerance in our town. It’s magnificent. Just don’t forget that we have it because we all believe in the same thing; it brings us together...The springs, Ms. Hovstad, our wonderful new springs. They’ve changed the soul of this town. Mark my words, Kirsten Springs are going to put us on the map, and there is no question about it...Everything is shooting ahead - real estate going up, money changing hands every hour, business humming-”
Peter Stockmann, Act I, Scene 1

Contamination in the Springs

Dr. Stockmann receives a letter confirming a speculation, the springs that draw visitors to the town every year are contaminated. *The Daily Messenger* agrees to publish an article with this new information. With the support of *The Daily Messenger* Dr. Stockmann has the majority on his side. He wants the truth of the springs to be known to the town.

For honest business to continue, a new water system must be created. Peter Stockmann, chairman of the board & mayor of the town, anticipates a new water system to cost 300,000 crowns and 2 years to build. The springs would be shut down during reconstruction, and the town would be taxed. Peter Stockmann informs the paper of the cost and re-construction. The majority are now with Peter Stockmann. Dr. Stockmann is the minority of the town.



The Town



An Enemy of the People

Opening Scene Design for
An Enemy of the People

Revealed



An Enemy of the People

Closing Scene Design for
An Enemy of the People

Set Design Mark Lund

Petra



Morten Kill

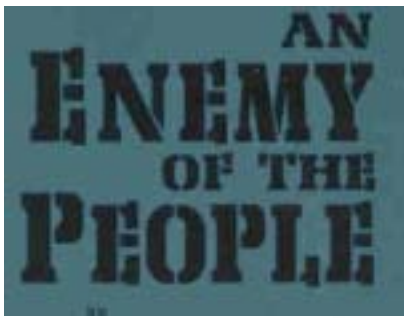


Billing



Costume Design Amber Knox

Cast



Terry Edward Moore



Doctor of the town.
Discovers poison
in Kirsten Springs.

Pam Nolte



Wife of Dr. Stockmann.
Mother of Petra, Eljif & Morten

Dr. Tom Stockmann

Catherine Stockmann

Sarah Lamb

Tal I is Moore

Petra

Eljif



Daughter of
Dr. Tom &
Catherine
Stockmann

Sons of Dr. Tom &
Catherine Stockmann

Marquam Krantz

Peter Stockman



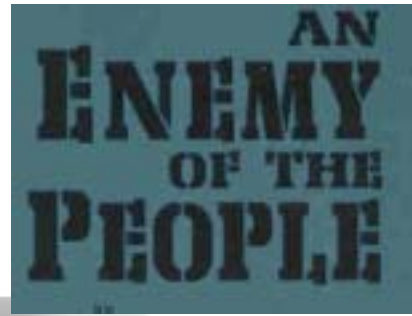
Jeremy Weizenbaum

Morten



Chair of the Board for
Kirsten Springs.
Mayor of the town.
Brother to Dr. Stockmann.

Cast



Kevin Brady



Bill

Nikki Visel



Hovstad

Editors of *The People's Daily Messenger*,
the liberal free & independent press of the town.

Tori Ritchey



Ms. Aslaksen

Publisher of
The Daily Messenger

Bill Higham



The Drunk

Townsperson

Clark Maffit



Morten Kill

Catherine Stockmann's Father

Edwin Stone



Captain Horster

Town Sea Captain.
Friend of the Stockmann's.

Production

Team

Director **Scott Nolte**

Scenic & Sound Design
Mark Lund

Costume Designer
Amber Knox

Lighting Designer
Jody Briggs

Props Designer
Charity Parenzini

Stage Manager
Rebecca Patterson

Assistant Stage Manager
Eric Grimes

Costume Shop Manager
Sarah Mosher

Dramaturg
Sonja Lowe