

# My Mother Said I Never Should: A Look at Modern Plays that Challenge Traditional Norms

Modern plays have a long history of challenging traditional norms, from the works of Henrik Ibsen to those of Sarah Kane. These plays often explore controversial topics such as sexuality, gender, and race, and they can be both thought-provoking and upsetting. In this article, we will take a look at some of the most notable modern plays that have pushed the boundaries of what is considered acceptable on stage.



## My Mother Said I Never Should (Modern Plays)

by Charlotte Keatley

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### 1. Hedda Gabler by Henrik Ibsen (1890)

Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* is a classic example of a modern play that challenges traditional norms. The play tells the story of a young woman who is trapped in a loveless marriage to a successful but dull man. Hedda is intelligent, ambitious, and bored, and she longs for a life of excitement

and passion. When she meets a former lover who represents everything that her husband is not, she becomes torn between her desire for him and her fear of social convention.

*Hedda Gabler* was considered shocking when it was first performed in 1890. The play's depiction of a woman who is dissatisfied with her marriage and who desires a life of her own was seen as a threat to the traditional family structure. However, the play has since become one of Ibsen's most famous and celebrated works, and it is still performed around the world today.

## **2. Miss Julie by August Strindberg (1888)**

August Strindberg's *Miss Julie* is another classic example of a modern play that challenges traditional norms. The play tells the story of a young woman from the upper class who falls in love with a servant. This relationship is forbidden by society, and it leads to tragedy for both Miss Julie and the servant.

*Miss Julie* was considered shocking when it was first performed in 1888. The play's depiction of a woman who defies social conventions and engages in a sexual relationship with a man from a lower class was seen as a threat to the social order. However, the play has since become one of Strindberg's most famous and celebrated works, and it is still performed around the world today.

## **3. The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams (1944)**

Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* is a semi-autobiographical play that tells the story of a young man named Tom who is trying to escape his stifling home life. Tom's mother is a domineering woman who is obsessed

with her son's future, and his sister Laura is a shy and fragile girl who lives in a world of her own. When Tom brings home a gentleman caller for Laura, he hopes that it will help her to break out of her shell. However, the gentleman caller is not interested in Laura, and he leaves her heartbroken.

*The Glass Menagerie* was considered a failure when it was first performed in 1944. However, the play has since become one of Williams' most famous and celebrated works, and it is still performed around the world today. The play's depiction of a dysfunctional family and the struggles of its members is both moving and heartbreaking.

#### **4. Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? by Edward Albee (1962)**

Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is a dark and disturbing play that tells the story of a married couple who are in the midst of a bitter divorce. The couple, George and Martha, are both intelligent and successful, but they are also deeply unhappy. They spend their evenings drinking and fighting, and they often take out their frustrations on their guests.

*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* was considered shocking when it was first performed in 1962. The play's depiction of a marriage in crisis and the characters' use of profanity and obscenity was seen as a threat to the traditional family structure. However, the play has since become one of Albee's most famous and celebrated works, and it is still performed around the world today.

#### **5. Angels in America by Tony Kushner (1991)**

Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* is a two-part play that tells the story of a group of friends and lovers in New York City during the AIDS crisis. The

play is both a personal and a political story, and it explores themes of love, loss, and redemption. *Angels in America* was considered groundbreaking when it was first performed in 1991, and it won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the Tony Award for Best Play. The play has since become one of the most important and celebrated works of American theater.

These are just a few examples of the many modern plays that have challenged traditional norms. These plays have pushed the boundaries of what is considered acceptable on stage, and they have helped to change the way we think about the world.

Modern plays continue to challenge traditional norms and explore controversial topics. They offer a unique and powerful way to examine the human condition and to provoke thought and discussion.



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