



Spring Awakening Dramaturgy

Jenna Rowell & Jake Allen



HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND SOURCE MATERIAL

German history and politics, Wedekind

ADOLESCENCE AND EDUCATION

Sexuality, mental health, sex education, punishment and shame

WHY THIS SHOW NOW?

Punk, politics, social media, mental health, sexuality, and education

RESOURCES & FURTHER LEARNING

Actor packets, Google Drive, and recommended materials





HISTORICAL CONTEXT & SOURCE MATERIAL

German history and politics, Wedekind's original
play

GERMAN HISTORY & POLITICS

CONSERVATIVE CULTURAL FORCES

- Development of industry
- European economic depressions
- Revolutions and uprisings
- National disillusionment

CHURCHES & RELIGION

- Teachings about suffering
- Catholics vs Protestants
- Effect on power structures/daily life



Source Material

Wedekind's *The Awakening of Spring*

Originally published 1891,
immediately banned

Re-emerges around 1900,
new public conversation

You should read it!

"...merely one of the documents in a paper war which has resulted at last in having the physiology of sex taught in many German schools."

(Ziegler, 1909)





“Gradually, very gradually, we are beginning to realize that ignorance and innocence are not synonymous; that an evil is not palliated by ignoring its existence.”

-FRANCIS J. ZIEGLER,
1909



ADOLESCENCE & EDUCATION

Mental health, sex education,
and punishment

EDUCATION

BLACK PEDAGOGY & HUMANISM

- “A boy has a back. When you hit it, he understands.”
- Likens children to work animals
- Corporal punishment
- Taught “The Classics” (Greek, Roman culture—like *The Aeneid*)
- Memorization, success based on exam scores
- High literacy rates

ADOLESCENCE

- Two categories of age: **childhood** and **adulthood**
- Unique experiences and needs of adolescence



MENTAL HEALTH & SUICIDE

- *"Almost every scene depicts an actual experience"* -Wedekind
- **½ of male suicides and ⅓ of female suicides** attributed to school stressors
- Exam results determine professional success or failure

SEXUALITY

- Homosexual acts (between men) illegal in Germany 1871 to 1994
- Sex was for reproduction after marriage only





WHY THIS SHOW NOW?

Punk, politics, social media, mental health,
sexuality, and education

PUNK

ANTI-CONSUMERISM, ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT

Rejects commercialism, uses
platform for activism
Punk is inherently political

IRREVERENCE

Sometimes you just do
something because it makes
your dad angry



NIHILISM

Nothing matters, so...mosh pit

AMATEURISM

No fancy equipment or skills,
low production value

CONTEMPORARY SEX EDUCATION

- Only **28 states** mandate both sex education and HIV education
- Medical accuracy
- LGBTQ+ issues
- Consent
- Abstinence, sex outside marriage





Social media has completely changed adolescence

Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among young people ages 10-24

Flaws in secondary education

Discussion



Actor packet and more resources: [click here](#)

