The Relevance of *Spring Awakening*

*Spring Awakening* is an adaptation of a play of the same name written in 1891 by German playwright Frank Wedekind. The play was Wedekind’s first major story and is considered to be fundamental to modern theatre. Wedekind’s play criticizes the sexually oppressive culture of the 19th century by showing the promiscuous behavior that arises from oppression. The play has often been censored or banned due to its subject matter.

Wedekind’s original play includes the exploration of teenage sexuality, masturbation, homosexuality, suicide, teenage pregnancy, and abortion. The same topics are addressed in the musical adaptation of *Spring Awakening* that premiered off-Broadway in 2006 and soon after moved to Broadway. The themes from the original play are still relevant today.

Wedekind’s play criticizes the lack of positive adult role models for young adults to look up to. The adults in the play force the teenagers to blindly conform to societal standards instead of educating them on things like human sexuality. This causes a lot of confusion for the teenagers and makes them feel ashamed to engage in what were seen as promiscuous behaviors such as masturbation or homosexuality. We still see this today as many young people are expected to conform to a societal idea of “perfect” and are not given the adequate resources and education to learn about human sexuality and other complexities of life. Even though Wedekind’s play was written in the late 1800’s, the harsh standards of society being forced onto young adults and the lack of education that teenagers are given on complex topics, like sexuality, are still issues we see in modern society.