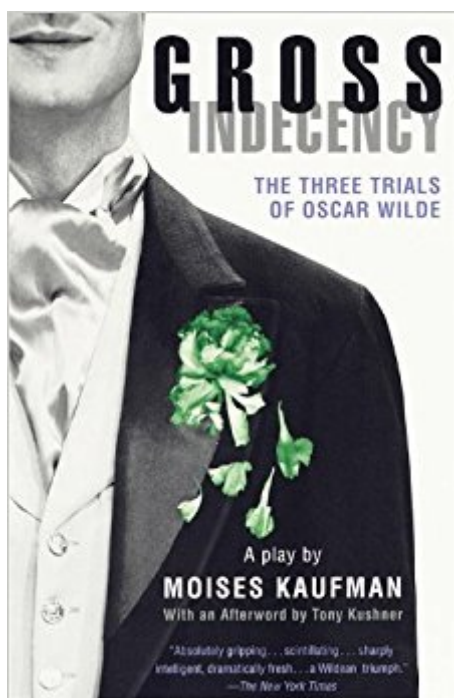


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# Gross Indecency: The Three Trials Of Oscar Wilde



## Synopsis

Winner of the Lambda Literary Award In this stunning work of theater, Moises Kaufman turns the trials of Oscar Wilde into a riveting human and intellectual drama. In April 1895 Oscar Wilde brought a libel suit against the Marquess of Queensberry, the father of his youthful lover, who had publicly maligned him as a sodomite. In doing so, England's reigning man of letters set in motion a series of events that would culminate in his ruin and imprisonment. For within a year the bewildered Wilde himself was on trial for acts of "gross indecency" and, implicitly, for a vision of art that outraged Victorian propriety. Expertly interweaving courtroom testimony with excerpts from Wilde's writings and the words of his contemporaries, *Gross Indecency* unveils its subject in all his genius and human frailty, his age in all its complacency and repression. The result is a play that will be read and studied for decades to come.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Absolutely gripping . . . scintillating . . . sharply intelligent, dramatically fresh . . . a Wildean triumph." --The New York Times  
"Thrilling . . . unforgettable, maybe even life-changing. . . . [It has] the inevitability and much of the monumentality of a Greek tragedy." --USA Today  
"A dazzling coup de theatre, at once compelling history and chilling human drama." --Time  
"Stunning . . . taut, shattering, yet delightfully exuberant . . . altogether fascinating." --Newsday

In April 1895 Oscar Wilde brought a libel suit against the Marquess of Queensberry, the father of his youthful lover, who had publicly maligned him as a sodomite. In doing so, England's reigning man of

letters set in motion a series of events that would culminate in his ruin and imprisonment. For within a year the bewildered Wilde himself was on trial for acts of "gross indecency" and - implicitly - for a vision of art that outraged Victorian propriety. In this work of the theater - a smash hit Off Broadway - Moises Kaufman turns the trials of Oscar Wilde into a riveting human and intellectual drama. Expertly interweaving courtroom testimony with excerpts from Wilde's writings and the words of his contemporaries, *Gross Indecency* unveils its subject in all his genius and human frailty, his age in all its complacency and repression.

This is a good play that tells the story of the three trials of Oscar Wilde that occurred in the mid-1890s. A series of down-on-their-luck young men testified against Wilde that he had corrupted them. The authorities gave Wilde a few separate attempts to flee to France, but Wilde chose to stand up for his convictions (and thus, martyrdom) rather than flee. He was ultimately sentenced to a few years of hard labor, was injured while doing so, and eventually died from his injuries a few years out of prison. The story is told in a jig-saw fashion, with bits from various books and different accounts. George Bernard Shaw makes a delightful appearance as well. This play came out in 1998, a few short years after "Don't Ask Don't Tell" and at the beginning of the crescendo of the culture wars. At the time, it was a seminal piece that showed how wrongly gay people were attacked (this takes place in Victorian England, but there is little difference if you go forward 50 years or back 500). Read (or seen) 18 years later, it has a different feel after *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003), *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) and the general acceptance of gays around the developed world. It is still poignant and significant, but now details the horrors and injustices that gays lived with before a more enlightened and humane era.

Read this for a literary project, coming from Shaffer's *Amadeus*. While not from the same era, it certainly has the same "interacting with two different time frames, with flashbacks" aspect of Shaffer's work. I'd definitely recommend it.

A requirement for class. But good book to read.

A surprisingly good play... !

This is a great play, which reads like a novel. It was a compelling look at history, giving the reader insight into Oscar Wilde, his work, and his personal life. It made me want to read more about Wilde,

and read more of his works. I had always loved *The Importance of Being Ernest*, now I'm looking for more!

Characters drive drama, they also breathe life into this oft-told tale of the suppression of the individual by a Victorian moral majority. Kaufman knows people thus his people live the events surrounding Wilde's trial. How righteous and how threatened they all were by the great aesthete! Yet, true to his characters, Kaufman gives each member of the audience several moments in which he or she must almost certainly say, "Yes, they were right to bring this arrogant man to the Reading treadmill." True to his protagonist, the playwright then takes the very breath away that could utter such an arrogant conclusion. These are powerful, living words resolved to burst in the mind of an audience with disturbing, delighting mental reverberations. No reader will be unmoved.

I have been lucky enough to share the initiation of Mr. Kaufman career in theater in Venezuela, have seen *Gross Indecency* both in New York and London several times, and have read the play, which is masterfully built. This is a unique experience, both read and seen, and believe me, Mr. Kaufman will be remembered in the future as one of the great names of theater of our time. This may sound as an exaggeration, but if you are someone who is looking for trends in theater, great acting, the influence of Brecht in new generations, never forget this author and director.

Never before have I ever had the chance to read and witness such a spectacular play as this one. It not only opened my eyes to the harsh realities that a homosexual man may face, but it also allowed me to appreciate and respect their lives and struggles in a predominantly heterosexual society. This play not only captured the essence of Oscar Wilde but also can claim a spot amongst the greatest and most moving plays of all time.

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