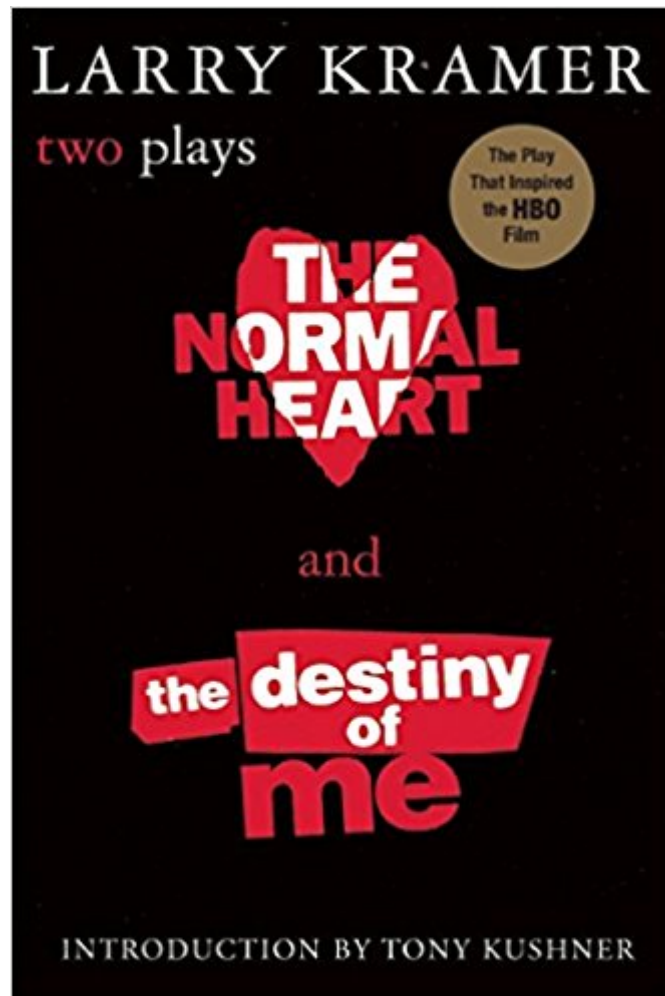




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The Normal Heart And The Destiny Of Me



Synopsis

The Normal Heart, set during the early years of the AIDS epidemic, is the impassioned indictment of a society that allowed the plague to happen, a moving denunciation of the ignorance and fear that helped kill an entire generation. It has been produced and taught all over the world. Its companion play, The Destiny of Me, is the stirring story of an AIDS activist forced to put his life in the hands of the very doctor he has been denouncing.

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Customer Reviews

The Normal Heart, set during the early days of the AIDS epidemic, is the impassioned story of Ned Weeks. The play is a moving denunciation of the ignorance and fear that lead to the worldwide plague that now exists. Its companion play, The Destiny of Me, continues the story of Weeks, now in a hospital undergoing treatment, as he finds himself confronting his life and fighting to get a little more time among the living. The Normal Heart was selected as one of the 100 Greatest Plays of the Twentieth Century by the Royal National Theatre of Great Britain "An extraordinary play! It is bracing and exciting to hear so much passion and intelligence. Kramer produces a cross fire of life-and-death energies that create a fierce and moving human drama."--Jack Kroll, Newsweek "The blood that's coursing through The Normal Heart is boiling hot. There can be little doubt that it is the most outspoken play round."--Frank Rich, The New York Times "Kramer's astounding drama about AIDS is too urgent to ignore! An astounding drama...a damning indictment of a nation in the middle of an epidemic with its head in the sand. It will make your hair stand on end even as the tears spurt from your eyes. Dynamite!"--Liz Smith, New York Daily News "Wired with anger, electric with rage....

Powerful stuff."--The Boston Globe "No one who cares about the future of the human race can afford to miss *The Normal Heart*."--Rex Reed "The Normal Heart has broken a great silence.... It has put politics and journalism to shame for the cover-up of a major disaster and one of the great moral dramas of our time."--Francis Fitzgerald, author of *Fire in the Lake* "Impassioned writing...explosively powerful...uniquely important."--The Advocate "I haven't been this involved--upset-in too damn long. Kramer honors us with this stormy, articulate theatrical work."--Harold Prince "Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart* is arguably the best political play of that schizophrenic decade and definitely the definitive dramatic exploration of the early years of the AIDS crisis."--Chicago Tribune "Larry Kramer's 1988 masterwork refuses to date."--Chicago Reader "Kramer's play actually may work better now in the tragic hindsight of history."--Chicago Sun-Times

The Destiny of Me was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, a double Obie winner, and the recipient of the Lucille Lortel Award for Best Play of the Year. "In *The Destiny of Me*, Larry Kramer has written a worthy sequel to *The Normal Heart*. What Kramer captures expertly in the past is family relations in their ambiguities, hostilities, and reconciliations...and almost equally skillfully in the present, the bristling relations of patient and doctor, patient and nurse.... A kind of--and this is meant as praise--Jewish-homosexual *Long Day's Journey Into Night*."--John Simon, New York

"Searing!"--Vanity Fair "Gives new hope to the American theater. One of the year's ten best.... Poignant, most moving, enriching."--Time "Overwhelmingly powerful...scaldingly honest...a seismic jolt of visceral theatricality!"--Frank Rich, The New York Times "A harrowing, emotionally naked family-memory-AIDS play, playful and moving, personable and disturbing, with scenes of devastating counterpoint. The work of a theater artist...like Arthur Miller at his best."--Newsday

"Driven by a fierce honesty and searing pain, Kramer's emotional and moral urgency fills *The Destiny of Me* with irresistible human truth."--Newsweek "A mature work by a gifted American playwright in his prime...bitter and angry and full of biting humor."--The Wall Street Journal "The *Destiny of Me* is bigger than any one of us. The *Long Day's Journey* comparisons are apt. At long last Kramer the activist has leashed in Kramer the polemicist, letting loose Kramer the artist."--QW

"The *Destiny of Me* is a beautiful, somber play, very mature, and very personal. Plays are meant for presentation. Great plays also stand well as great literature. This is one of them. Kramer proves once again his place as one of the best writers of our times."--Lambda Book Report

Larry Kramer is a man with strong emotions, and he has a special talent for translating those emotions to the written word so that they may be translated back to the spoken word by others in the form of a drama without any loss of that emotional urgency. I had the opportunity to see the

original production of a stellar example of Kramer's dramatic skills, *The Normal Heart*, at New York's Public Theater in 1985 with Brad Davis as its star, the original Ned Weeks. It was a shattering evening, and the play struck me with the force of a hurricane. Reading the play for the first time over 30 years later, I'm still powerfully impacted by the forcefulness of Kramer's words. Although the play is set in the early days of the AIDS epidemic, when the number of the dead was still only in the thousands, it does not seem dated in the least. The Royal National Theatre of Great Britain has included the play in its list of the 100 greatest plays of the twentieth century, and the honor is well deserved. Kramer's play speaks to universal values and passions which can withstand the passage of time. Undoubtedly students will be studying this text and actors will be performing this play for many years to come. *The Destiny of Me*, a companion play to *The Normal Heart* also featuring Ned Weeks as the protagonist, is a memory play and is not quite the primal scream of the earlier drama. It is set a number of years after *The Normal Heart* when Ned Weeks has become ill, but, occasionally confusingly, it also is set in Weeks' youth. Despite the muted emotional tones (as contrasted with *The Normal Heart*), the play still packs quite the powerful punch, a punch sufficiently strong that the play was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in drama the year it was first produced. Because of the ebb and flow in time setting from Weeks' childhood to his present, this play probably works much better when seen in performance than when read as a text. *The Destiny of Me* requires a reader with a skilled imagination to play out the drama in his or her head in order for it to be fully appreciated. Merely reading and absorbing the words will not do this drama justice. Nevertheless, the effort should be made because this drama, too, is one that is likely to withstand the passage of time. It is a play very much of its time at the same time it is a play that, like its predecessor, takes up universal values and passions. These are the elements of great drama; these are the elements of the two plays by Larry Kramer in this timeless volume.

The rating and description are mainly for the first of these two plays, "*The Normal Heart*," which is Kramer's angry and heart-wrenching account of the social response to AIDS in the early years of its appearance in New York. A long-time admirer of Randy Shilts' book "*And the band played on*" I found this to be a condensed, angrier, and more impassioned companion piece; in fact I'm assigning it as the first of three pieces on AIDS in a course I've developed on disease narratives. Kramer's play is the artist/playwright/care-giver/activist's perspective; Shilts (excerpts only) will be the journalistic viewpoint and Abraham Verghese's "*My own country*" rounds it out with a doctor's account. "*The Destiny of Me*," while doubtless brilliant and troubling in its own way, did not quite do it for me maybe because it was a much more personal story that I couldn't relate to. I still think it's

worth a read.. but am glad that I'd decided on the former for the course. My other choice would have been "Angels in America" by Tony Kushner but ultimately I went with Kramer's play not because as it's closer to the events as they happened. What's really shocking in an eye-opening way reading this play several decades since it was written is the fact that the word AIDS does not even make an appearance once! And yet it's obvious what's being talked about. Anybody interested in human behavior, in sickness & how to cope with the fears that come with uncertainty or in this case, sheer ignorance, should read this and be outraged.

I so enjoyed this book. It brought forward all that they had to fight for. In some ways i was ashamed of how this country could not see what was going on here and how those who were in need of medical attention were denied it. I for one don't judge people for their sexual preference. It is not for me to say. It is up to who they believe their maker is. I do not believe in a vengeful God. i believe in a loving God. He gave us free will, so in a sense he left it up to us to decide how to live our lives. As long as they are good people and a loving people why should i be their judge and jury. How do they say it i am a straight person. I have a loving husband and two children that I hope I have brought up to not judge how others live. We have all kinds of good friends and yes some of them are gay and trans-sexual. I thank my father for how he brought my brothers and I up. he said, "until someone proves that they can't be trusted keep them as your friend, until such time as they do you wrong." He taught us well and because of him I have a very good friends. Thank You for asking how I felt about this story. i wish Everybody a very happy and healthy life.

I have never read a Larry Kramer play nor have I been introduced to much literature about the AIDS epidemic, but these plays deliver a touching narration on not only historical context but the emotional impact on the characters of this play. The Normal Heart deserves its critical acclamation and our attention as artist and as a fellow citizens of the world. It is not afraid to bring out the dark details of this time and stamp a message that should be heralded in today's time. The Destiny of Me, in my opinion is just as strong of a play, but focuses more on the deliverance of the main characters ego and the struggles of being a human being in this time period. I strongly recommend this play not only as a thespian, but to anyone wanting to understand the AIDS epidemic on a deeper level. I will definitely be reading more literature by Mr. Kramer.

I used to teach playwriting and have found some of the most beautiful fiction (and in this case, non-fiction), in plays. After seeing the play ages ago, and more recently the movie, I wanted to be

able to read the absolute poetry of The Normal Heart. Simply wonderful.

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