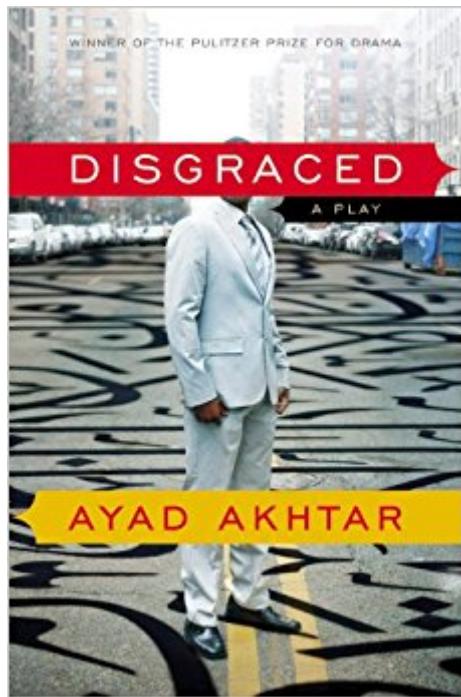


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# Disgraced: A Play



## **Synopsis**

"Sparkling and combustible" (Bloomberg Businessweek), "DISGRACED rubs all kinds of unexpected raw spots with intelligence and humor" (Newsday). "In dialogue that bristles with wit and intelligence, Akhtar puts contemporary attitudes toward religion under a microscope, revealing how tenuous self-image can be for people born into one way of being who have embraced another.... Everyone has been told that politics and religion are two subjects that should be off-limits at social gatherings. But watching these characters rip into these forbidden topics, there's no arguing that they make for ear-tickling good theater" (New York Times). "Add a liberal flow of alcohol and a couple of major secrets suddenly revealed, and you've got yourself one dangerous dinner party" (Associated Press).

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This is a contemporary play shows modern day Americans trying to come to grips with differences in cultural and religious perspectives. The characters interact both in familial and workplace relationships. The central characters are Christian, Muslim and Jewish. It is written with sensitivity and respect with no hint of bias showing just how difficult it sometimes is to see things from another person's point of view. There is a reason that this play won the Pulitzer Prize as it really challenges us to think. I would definitely recommend this fine piece of literature for those who truly want to read something you will continue to ponder long after the final page is read.

Ayad Akhtar's 90-minute one-act Pulitzer Prize-winning drama is one of those rare theatrical works that can leave a reader rather immobile when in the midst of processing the combustible nature of it. In the background of your mind, you think to yourself, Is he sincerely going to go down that road and say publicly what you and everybody else might be thinking but are too polite to mention in casual conversation? And then, he does. Then, a volatile awkwardness ensues, and you have to take a breather to get a second wind for the next spitfire dosage. The play involves lawyer Amir Kapoor, a disavowed Muslim raised American, who, for the sake of his career, glosses over and dismisses the traditions and values of his Muslim heritage. By doing so, he feels that that he will not be intimately connected with the primitive and zealous back woods fanaticism of extremists, despite that there are kernels of appreciation that he has for his roots. Yet, his wife, Emily, a burgeoning art celebrity who uses Muslim themed elements in her artwork values the Muslim tapestry, traditional and otherwise, that her husband, Amir, shuns. Before and during an important dinner party for Emily's Jewish art dealer and agent named Isaac and his wife Jory who happens to be Amir's lawyerly coworker, Amir and Emily discuss a controversial case which might involve religious discrimination of an Imam, a Muslim holy figure who seems to wield some influence over Abe, Amir's Americanized nephew. After being mentioned in a write-up in the prestigious New York Times as a possible unofficial supporter and or helper of the defendant in question, Amir begins to quake at how it might make him look if he's associated with an iman who supposedly financially supported terrorist related groups. The charges, too, may be trumped-up and falsified because of politics, ignorance and cultural insensitivity, and this, too ignites Amir's ire, which lies just beneath the surface. He is between a rock and a hard place. And when the flood gates open, they open wide indeed with an outpouring of venomous dialog that can churn the discomfort level to the extreme, especially so when Isaac and Amir begin to politely converse. *Disgraced* is appropriately titled, because, by the end of the play, that is exactly what happens to all the characters. They become disgraced, though the disgrace factor varies for each one. Some carry more weight than others, and Amir seems to be the biggest loser in this jolting, vitriolic post 9-11 peep into the judgmental conflict between cultures, politics and ethnic groups. All five characters are changed in ways that they never thought they would be. New enlightenments are unpleasantly gleaned because of the teaspoon of vinegar that they must all be forced to drink. This was a great and surprising play that was very worthy of the Pulitzer Prize.

Wow, this is a must-read! The play really gets into that ambivalent space where MANY Muslims live, but we are NOT represented in mainstream media. It's funny, smart, controversial, & VERY

thought-provoking!

Akhtar examines here what happens to a Muslim who tries to hide his origins. During the course of the play, we see him lose his job, his family be torn apart, his cousin become radicalized, and the protagonist turn 180 degrees. There was an artificial sense of balance or symmetry to the ways the playwright advanced his protagonist through the stages of his loss, but in the end, this was a compelling text.

Absolutely deserved winner of the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for drama. This is a 90 minute, 4 scene (1 act) play that has 5 characters that range in age from 22 to 40. They are of black, white, Jewish and Muslim backgrounds and they all currently live in New York. Questions of work, culture, love, loyalty and traditions are all discussed and exposed. The pace of the play is excellent. There are no dead scenes or digressive moments - every word is important and impactful. The dialogue is incredible - there are moments of tenderness and humor, as well as those that will enrage some readers and make most think deeply. Mr. Akhtar wrote an excellent essay "On Reading Plays" that appears at the beginning of this edition. He does an outstanding job explaining how reading a play is different from watching it (this is not a new sentiment, but he writes about it exquisitely). Upon finishing the play this evening, I got on the internet and started looking for where it is playing. It is currently playing in Boston, about 250 miles from my house. I will drive up next week to see it.

Heard DISGRACED: A PLAY (Hachette Audio), written by Ayad Akhtar and narrated by Aasif Mandvi, January LaVoy and Kevin T. Collins. The story centers on a dinner party that includes an ex-Muslim, an African-American, a Jew and a WASP . . . it quickly becomes explosive as those in attendance exchange opinions about faith and politics in the modern world. I very much enjoyed this play and kept thinking how I would like to see it performed onstage . . . after listening to it, I found out that the playwright won the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Drama . . . that did not surprise me.

Though far from a perfect play, it's still one of the most exciting blasts of fresh air for the American theatre in years. Avoiding the dead ends of whimsy, meta self referential inside jokes, cuteness, and "magical realism", which is what most young playwrights coming out of the MFA industrial complex are taught, Akhtar has real issues to probe and he gets right to it. BTW, if you have not listened to the interview with him on the American Theatre podcast OFFSCRIPT, head over there right now! A whip smart writer.

This is a well-written play that feels very real and really just makes you sad about the state of humanity. Centered around a theme of prejudice, *Disgraced* really captures the idea that nobody can escape prejudice; many are guilty of it, many are victims of it, but interestingly enough, many are on both sides of it.

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