



# A Cultural Analysis of HIV/AIDS Representation

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A child receives vaccinations at Manhica Health Centre, Mozambique.

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“It is time to close the book on infectious diseases and declare the war against pestilence won.”

- United States Surgeon General William H. Stewart, 1969



# The Beginning of a New Pandemic

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- ❖ Medical advancements and a pre-AIDS world
- ❖ A brief history of AIDS
- ❖ AIDS in the context of plague history: “The act of an angry God...”
- ❖ Accusations and theories of origin



Rev. Jerry Falwell and Ronald Reagan

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“Societies need to have one illness which becomes identified with evil, and attaches blame to its victims.”  
- Susan Sontag

“AIDS is not just God's punishment for homosexuals; it is God's punishment for the society that tolerates homosexuals.”

- Jerry Falwell



# Meanings, Metaphors and Social Implications

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- ❖ Metaphorical importance of AIDS
- ❖ Frontiers: national and physical
- ❖ HIV/AIDS and public policy
- ❖ AIDS Denialism
- ❖ Representing modern diseases

# An Overview of Sources

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- ❖ **Literary Theory** (*AIDS and Its Metaphors* by Susan Sontag; *How to Have Theory in an Epidemic* by Paula Triefler; *Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism* and *How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic* by Douglas Crimp; *The Spectacle of AIDS* by Simon Watney)
- ❖ **Drama and Fiction** (*The Normal Heart* by Larry Kramer, *Angels in America* by Tony Kushner, *Grief* by Andrew Holleran, *Plays Well With Others* by Allan Gurganus, *Father Michael's Story: A Novel of Africa* by Johan Steyn, *Cutting for Stone* by Abraham Verghese)
- ❖ **Non-fiction Narratives** (*And the Band Played On* by Randy Shiltz, *The Invisible Cure* by Helen Epstein, *The River* by Ed Hooper, *My Brother* by Jamaica Kincaid, *The Tragedy of Today's Gays* by Larry Kramer, *Mortal Embrace: Living with AIDS* by Emmanuel Dreuilhe)





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“This disease will be the end of many of us, but not nearly all, the dead will be commemorated and will struggle on with the living, and we are not going away. We won’t die secret deaths anymore. The world only spins forward. We will be citizens, the time has come.”

-Prior Walter in Tony Kushner’s Angels in America