

Waiting for godot major themes

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Waiting for Godot A Play Concerning Nothing That Means Everything Ralph Waldo Emerson, famous literary writer, once inscribed, “ Much of human life is lost in waiting” (Richardson, 24). Individuals cannot escape the waiting in daily life even if they wished so. Waiting is inscribed into society, from waiting for a bus ride, beverages at a favourite coffee house, items to be checked out at a grocery store or simply, arriving to a location too early for an occasion to occur. In Samuel Beckett’s legendary play Waiting for Godot, the main characters Estragon and Vladimir obsess about waiting for the mysterious individual Godot to arrive. From this waiting, scholars have created many literary analysis of the play the most persuasive being political, religious and existentialist in nature. The Cold War took place over decades, beginning in 1947 and concluding in 1991. The word cold is not only used in the title of this war, but also inscribed deeply into it. The war did not feature guns, bullets and soldiers, instead the war was fought aloofly between communist countries in things like sport events, propaganda and technological opposition. The Cold War appears as a metaphor for many scholars in Waiting for Godot. The characters hold a lot of emotion but never seem to really do anything with it, except discuss it at length. More than once the word nothing is used. There is often “ nothing to do” (Beckett, 13) and “ nothing to show” (Beckett, 4) and the character’s world stays the same. Scholars also point to the play as being Marxist in nature. Godot is the Capitalist full of power and who separates himself from the working class, the other characters are the working class, without personal purpose or goals. Pozzo and Lucky serve as an example of the Marxism analysis as well, Pozzo illustrating that to the Capitalist to labour. “ Pozzo is blind to what is

happening around him and Lucky is mute to protest his treatment" (Hutchings, 68) serves as evidence of this relationship. Political interpretations abound in this play as do religious ones. The character in which the play focuses on yet never makes an actual appearance is Godot. It is imperative for the religious examination of the play to note that the root word of Godot is God. Perhaps this is what spun the belief that Godot is a representation of God. Religious references are apparent in the play right from the beginning. Estragon asks Vladimir what he wishes from Godot and offers as a suggestion in his probing "A kind of prayer?" to which Vladimir replies "Precisely" (Beckett, 14). Estragon and Vladimir discuss religion and specific bible passages during their wait. For example, they speak about a biblical reference of two thieves. "Our Saviour. Two thieves. One is supposed to ... have been saved and the other . . . (he searches for the contrary of saved) . . . damned" Vladimir states and when Estragon asks what the thief is saved from, Vladimir responds "Hell" (Beckett, 64). It is interesting to note that in the bible passage, both thieves are saved from hell and like the thieves, Estragon and Vladimir wish to be saved from what Estragon later claims is "hell" (Beckett, 89). God and Godot also share a physical attribute; both have beards. Lucky states that Godot has a "white beard" (Beckett, 43) and later, the character of the boy offers that Godot also has a beard. Beckett frequently disappeared "into a trance" (Knowlson, 401) when writing and many followers of the religious analysis have accepted this as evidence that Beckett was unaware of his attentions, thus influenced by a "higher power" (Knowlson, 232). Strong appointments to this are those who see the play as Existentialist in nature. Existentialism, as

defined by Oxford English Dictionary is, " The individual's unique position as a self-determining agent responsible for the authenticity of his or her choices. " The central idea of existentialism is that humans are accountable for designing, implementing and adhering to their own destiny. Thus, destiny is not God made, it is person made. Estragon and Vladimir have decided to stay in the dreary physical setting of isolation and containment. Estragon seems to offer readers a deeper thought process than his quiet and reliant friend Vladimir. Vladimir states, " All I know is that the hours are long, ... under these conditions, and constrain us to beguile them with proceedings which — how shall I say — which may at first sight seem reasonable, until they become a habit... you follow my reasoning? " (Beckett, 91). This quote is powerful, suggesting that filling one's day with actions just to pass time such as removing a boot as Estragon did, is suitable for a short period but unacceptable for a long course of time. Although he states this, Vladimir does not leave the scene. Pozzo and Lucky, two of the three only people Estragon and Vladimir have contact with, have a slave and master relationship, but neither chooses to step outside this, instead the two characters grow deeply dependant on one another. Vladimir and Estragon go as far as to contemplate suicide, but do not proceed to do so. Thus, all the characters in Waiting for Godot, could live an altered life, with enhanced opportunities, but choose to stay frozen in the dark. under these conditions, and constrain us to beguile them with proceedings which — how shall I say — which may at first sight seem reasonable, until they become a habit. You may say it is to prevent our reason from foundering. No doubt. But has it not long been straying in the night without end of the abyssal depths?

Academics have long linked Waiting for Godot and Beckett himself, to the existential movement. The greatest argument followers of the theory have is that Beckett never discloses Godot being a symbol of God, instead, he greatly declined the claim stating “ that if by Godot I had meant God I would [have] said God, and not Godot” (Knowlson, 412). “ Waiting is painful. Forgetting is painful. But not knowing which to do is the worse type of suffering”, Paulo Coelho, celebrated Brazilian author wrote. The internal and external suffering which Estragon and Vladimir seem spellbound in is dreadful yet alluring in the same instant. Dreadful because the characters and audience wait for relief and alluring because they are enticed about what could be but is not. The waiting in Waiting for Godot has long stood as a secrecy requiring solving and the theories of politics, existentialism and religion offer convincing analyses to this literary puzzle. No one but Beckett himself and perhaps not even him, comprehend the genuine significance of this play, thus, like Estragon and Vladimir, scholars and audiences alike are caught waiting for a conclusion that may never arrive. Works Cited Beckett, Samuel. Waiting for Godot. New York: Grove Press, 1954. Hutching, William. Waiting for Godot: A Reference Guide. West Port: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005. Knowlson, James. Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett. New York: Simon & Schuster , 1996. Richardson, Robert D., Jr. Emerson: The Mind on Fire. California: University of California Press, 1995.