

Rosencrantz and
guildenstern are dead



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The argument of whether our lives are predetermined or not has been one that has been going on since the beginning of civilization. In Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* Stoppard explores the idea of existentialism in a number of different ways. The roles Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have as actors represent our roles in modern society. Stoppard also uses barriers like the stage to reflect the human condition and question our existence. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's relaxed attitudes towards their surroundings and social interaction as a mirror into modern human existence.

Stoppard makes his readers think deeply about our existence and our free will through the actions of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* Stoppard uses the characters roles as actors to mirror our existence today. One way our existentialism is questioned is the way the dialogue is set up. The characters are sometimes reading from a script, and sometimes they are speaking from free will. Guildenstern alludes to the script when he says " Words, words. They're all we have to go on. ". The script the characters have to follow mirrors human fate.

We may have free will, or our lives may be predetermined just like a script. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have very small roles in the play of Hamlet. At times, Rosencrantz even feels " like a spectator" as he sits backstage waiting for his part in the play. The time Rosencrantz and Guildenstern spend waiting around backstage is parallel to how we live our lives today. We wait around for something to happen, and when it does, we often don't know how to react. A big part of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's role as actors is participation in the play.

Rosencrantz says the audience doesn't " come expecting sordid and gratuitous filth." For the actors, the acting is a source of life. For them, all that happens is during their time acting. Similar to all human capability, humans can only accomplish what they are able to in their own life. In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* Stoppard uses the stage to represent modern existentialism. When on the stage, the characters have little to no control over their actions or fate. While on the stage, the characters must follow their roles and responsibilities.

At times in the play " attendants exit backwards indicating that Ros and Guil should follow" them on stage. Just like people do in their everyday lives, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have their responsibilities in they play. The stage also acts a reflection of human life. Guildenstern observes he has alternatives to his situation " But not choice". Similar to the stories of fictional characters on stage, true life events do not always end with ideal results, and sometimes we must make the best of our situation. For Rosencrantz and Guildenstern the stage is also a kind of cage.

The two characters had " had enough. To tell you the truth, I'm relieved. And he disappears from view. " The stage is a prison for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. They are trapped there for the entire play, until they die. This is just like how we as humans trapped in our own person. The final way in which our modern idea of existentiality is represented in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* is through the pre-determined fate of the characters. The eventual fates of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is that they are executed.

Guildenstern learns from his " experience, most things end in death. ". Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are very quick to accept their deaths, because

they are aware that it is inevitable. This acceptance of a dire fate can reflect the human knowledge of a limited existence. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern also accept their limited role in Hamlet's life and its significance to their own play. There is not much time Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are with Hamlet for long periods of time before he leaves them for whatever reason.

Guildenstern and Rosencrantz never really complain or fight the fact that they are unimportant in the events going on around them. We as humans today usually feel the need to be important, unlike Rosencrantz and Guildenstern who only come in when they are needed. Finally, Guildenstern and Rosencrantz show their acceptance of fate when Rosencrantz is playing with a coin at the beginning of the play. Although "Guildenstern's bag is nearly empty" while Rosencrantz's is nearly full, Guildenstern still decides to continue with the game.

Both question whether the coin is determined to land on heads every time, but Guildenstern loses, he accepts it as fate and moves on. This represents modern society and how we move on whenever something happens in our lives that we can't explain or understand. In conclusion, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern represent modern humanity's existential despair. This is shown through their actions and words throughout the play. The roles of the actors and what they represent, the use of the stage and its purposes, and the attitudes of the characters towards their fates are all ways our existentialism is shown.