

Waiting for godot –
samuel beckett
"nothing happens,
nobody comes,
nobody goes" a...



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Waiting For Godot By Samuel Beckett “ Nothing happens. Nobody comes, nobody goes. It’s awful. ” How far do you agree? Initially written in French in 1948 as “ En Attendant Godot”, Samuel Beckett’s play was first staged in 1952, in Paris.

It represents one of the most important movements of the twentieth century and is an example of the so-called “ Theatre of the Absurd”, which had subsequently inspired numerous plays that were based on the idea of an illogical universe. The plot of the play is fairly simple and is, in fact, purely a development of its title. Its description is rather ambiguous, for while one may think that no action whatsoever takes place throughout the play, another might suppose otherwise. Principally, the story includes two tramps waiting – at first hopefully, but in time with decreasing optimism – for an indefinite, anonymous figure called Godot. Estragon and Vladimir (the tramps) entertain themselves with a seemingly improvised, somewhat meaningless and never-ending dialogue.

Each Act represents a day, hence two days are spent wallowing about, waiting. The ‘ process’ of expectation is sometimes interrupted by intruders, such as Pozzo and Lucky – two highly grotesque and metaphorical personas, and an indistinct figure, a Boy, who announces to the tramps in person that Godot will not be arriving until the next day. Hopefully and at the same time despairingly, the tramps resume their vigil by the tree, waiting for Godot, as the curtain veils the stage. The setting of the play is even plainer: an unknown muddy plateau with a tree, which could represent any space of land on Earth, just like the characters (with their unfortunately chosen

names) could embody any soul of the human society. This is effectively the place where Godot is not.

Beckett avoids any precision or characterization of the setting, stating only: "A country road. A tree. Evening." This intentional lack of detail focuses the audience's attention on the characters.

The play itself has no prologue or epilogue, no twist or unexpected change of circumstances. The unity of time is two days, however, it may represent any time period - be it several days or years. Hence it is an extract from a monotonous and impassive life of two vagabonds, who do nothing and go nowhere. They grope blindly for a meaning in existence, yearning for a sign, some sign, any sign - just like Pozzo, blind and helpless, cries for help in Act II. This immobility of the characters, the lack of action and the perpetual exchange of insignificant dialogue may seem tedious to an audience.

In this case Estragon's phrase: "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes. It's awful!" is a summary of the play. From this point of view, the play does, indeed, seem drained of any rational and common sense. There is no logical structure to it, nor is there a sense of fluidity in the ideas expressed by the characters. In fact, one might go as far as to affirm that the play is devoid of ideas entirely and represents a mere collection of spontaneously improvised dialogues: as if Vladimir and Estragon were one unit (one being a man on the verge of mental sanity and the other - his consciousness) whose thoughts were scattered randomly across the pages of the script, their words avoiding any rationalization. The only symbol of a possible order in this

thoroughly alienated world is the sense of time suggested by the growth of leaves on the tree between the first and second day.

And yet even that seems bizarre and irrelevant. The interruption of Pozzo and Lucky seems to be a variation to the everlasting conversation between Estragon and Vladimir, but the audience is disillusioned when the two tramps are once again deserted, left alone to ponder on their worldly insignificance and bitter ennui. The curtain closes on their immobility and we imagine a vicious circle repeating itself forever. On the other hand, one might say that the lack of action in "Waiting For Godot" is compensated by the mere depth of its meaning and metaphorical connotation. This play illustrates an attitude toward man's existence on earth: the hope, freedom and slavery, camaraderie, corruption, and incomprehension of human aspirations, united together to paint a caricature of reality and demonstrate to the audience the absurdity of life. Vladimir and Estragon search in vain for the meaning in their lives, while waiting and doing nothing, for the act of doing nothing is safer than thinking: Estragon: "Let's go.

" Vladimir: "We can't." Estragon: "Why not?" Vladimir: "We're waiting for Godot." The deliberate ignorance of the possibility of choice is demonstrated here and in the pitiful position of Lucky (who is, ironically, the highly unlucky mockingbird of the play: a figure that mocks martyrs for their choice of crucifixion and penance). Freedom is a state of mind and so is imprisonment and it is a decision made subconsciously, but individually.

By illustrating to us the utter absurdness of waiting for destiny or a sign of God's aid and an allowance for freedom, Beckett emphasizes the duty of

every individual to take a choice, to act. The figure of Godot – ideologically, figuratively and even namely implying to the anonymous icon of God – is a symbol of destiny, for which the two tramps await. And so they joke, they quarrel, they insult each other, contemplate suicide and try to sleep, but their attempts to depart are fruitless. They now lead a meaningless life (as meaningless as their constant exclamations and unsuccessful conversations), losing track of time and memory, passing time, existing: Estragon: “ We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist? ” They merely exist, breathe, walk and eat. All these verbs are included in the play, for they give us the illusion of reality on the stage.

However, far from that, the vagabonds are simply emblems of despair. These religious beliefs prevail in the play, placing faith under the spotlight of doubt. It is a scandalous topic, but it is presented in a somewhat naive manner: Estragon and Vladimir themselves hardly know what Christianity is; they consider the Biblical story an anecdote, for they know nothing of it. Beckett seems to doubt the necessity of religion without the basic knowledge of biblical myths, which, in our days, is a highly common occurrence.

Nonetheless both Estragon and Vladimir believe in the existence of Godot, whose prophet descended seven skies to deliver a message. They do question his identity and distrust his facelessness and Estragon at times is ready to quit the worthless act of waiting, but scolded by Vladimir, remains immobile.

Estragon: “ I cannot seem to depart. ” Estragon can see the logic of renouncing this lifestyle clearly, but neither can do it completely. So no change occurs throughout the play, but this insufficiency of accomplishment <https://assignbuster.com/waiting-for-godot-samuel-beckett-nothing-happens-nobody-comes-nobody-goes-analysis/>

is symbolic, suggestive. Thus a question flourishes in one's mind: are men avoiding change for the fear of unknown, the comfort of undertaking no action or for a traditional reason? Many themes are explored in "Waiting For Godot", which makes it particularly interesting. It would be factual to affirm that this play discards traditional plot, structure, characters and actions to attack its audience with a disorienting experience which leaves them slightly baffled, but it is with this striking effect that the author commands us to reflect over his arguments.

As many might point out, the dullness of the play lies in the complexity of the duration of the dialogue and the difficulty in comprehending the general idea of the play. However, as others say, every word and aspect of the dialogue is employed in order to build this chief idea. The strength of imagery created by Beckett is intensified by the grotesqueness of numerous scenes and the caricature of the characters involved. Hence, the factor which determines an individual interpretation of the play – is the whether the aims of an audience are recreational or analytical.