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## **Waiting for Godot**

Waiting for Godot by the Irish writer Samuel Becket is a powerful play attesting to the inevitable suffering inherent in human existence. The play depicts this agony even more poignantly by the fact that it is devoid of a well-organized plot and a conventional setting: “ A country road. A tree” (Act 1). This is all the setting there is. . Devoid of these familiar elements, the audience or reader has no choice but to face one of the most fundamental elements of the play: an endless wait. As the play opens, the audience or reader meets Estragon, or rather Gogo, who is struggling unsuccessfully to remove his boot, which is causing acute pain on his foot. He asks his friend Vladimir (Didi) to help him remove his boot. While Didi does not refuse his help, he does not act to help him. Furthermore, Gogo is also totally insensitive to Didi plight whatever it might be:

### **VLADIMIR: What are you doing?**

ESTRAGON: Taking off my boot. Did that never happen to you?

VLADIMIR: Boots must be taken off every day; I'm tired telling you that. Why don't you listen to me?

ESTRAGON: (feebly). Help me!

VLADIMIR: It hurts?

ESTRAGON: (angrily). Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts!

VLADIMIR: (angrily). No one ever suffers but you. I don't count. I'd like to hear what you'd say if you had what I have.

## **ESTRAGON: It hurts?**

VLADIMIR: (angrily). Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts! (Act 1).

Both men are locked in the open country at nightfall. They seem to have no past, and their future is uncertain because they are trapped in their present situation. They are unable to move on with their lives because they are waiting for someone whom they call Godot. They engage in pointless and sometimes ridiculous and humorous conversations only to make the wait more tolerable. Suddenly, out of nowhere another couple appears: Pozzo and Lucky. Both couples engage in conversation, but these conversations do not lead anywhere either. They only make the passage of time more tolerable. Finally, at nightfall a boy arrives only to let them know that Godot will not come tonight, but surely he will come tomorrow. This is the essence of the play, which is divided in two acts. Yet behind this apparent simplicity hides an incredible story of suffering, not only of both couples, but of humanity in general. What follows is an analysis of the relationship between the two couples, the meaning of the boots and the hat, and the role of the messenger who appears at the end of both acts. The interplay of these elements gives the play its deep meaning.

The painful removal of his boot, which Gogo eventually accomplishes without help from Didi, is symbolic of man's solitary existence. Even when Didi is at his side, Gogo must face his ordeal alone, just like every human being must face the ordeals imposed by his existence. Gogo's struggle with his boot shows how humans are drawn into daily and sometimes painful struggles. Each day is a challenge full of obstacles, which each human being must ultimately face alone. Once Gogo is relieved from the pain caused by his boot, the reader or audience witnesses the first instance of pointless talking

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between the two friends in an attempt to overcome boredom. Didi is intrigued by the fact that only one of the four Evangelists in the gospels mentions the story of the thieves, one of whom was supposed to be saved and the other damned. Gogo refuses to engage in the argument and suggests they should move on, but Didi reminds him they can't because they are waiting for Godot. Gogo begins to have doubts about the correct place of the meeting. It is here that the audience and the reader receive the first clue that both men are engaged in an endless and hopeless wait. Every new day will be a copy of the last:

**ESTRAGON: He should be here.**

VLADIMIR: He didn't say for sure he'd come

ESTRAGON: And if he doesn't come?

VLADIMIR: We'll come back tomorrow.

ESTRAGON: And then the day after tomorrow

VLADIMIR: Possibly

ESTRAGON: And so on.

VLADIMIR. The point is---

ESTRAGON: Until he comes. (Act 1)

While the play is supposed to develop in two acts which last two days, there are many indications that the play encases not just two days but many years of the lives of the four characters. Toward the end of the first act Didi and Gogo are recalling the time they have been together, which is about fifty years. Later, when Pozzo and Lucky arrive at the scene, Pozzo states that Lucky has served him for sixty years. Furthermore, while the act shows only two days of the characters' lives, there are many indications that these

encounters have been taking place day after day for an undetermined period of time. When Lucky and Pozzo leave at the end of the first act, Didi points out: “How they have changed” (Act 1), implying that they have seen them before some time ago. Gogo points out that Pozzo and Lucky did not recognize them. Didi’s remark to the boy “You have a message from Mr. Godot,” (Act 1) suggests that Didi and Gogo have seen the boy before, most likely trying to deliver the same message—that Godot will not come tonight. If this is the case, it is interesting that the boy does not recognize them either. Finally, at the beginning of Act 2 when Didi and Gogo find themselves by the tree of the previous day, Didi remarks that whereas the previous day the tree was bare, now it is full of leaves. It is very likely that more than a day has passed.

Didi and Gogo have complementary personalities. Didi is the more practical of the two and is also more aware of social norms. In the second act, when they try to figure out why Gogo is beaten, Didi remarks that “the truth is there are things that escape you that don't escape me, you must feel it yourself. (Act 2). Gogo, is dominated by his physical needs; he is anxious to ask Pozzo for the bones from the chicken he has just eaten, but it is Didi who advises him on the best time to make his request to Pozzo. Didi remembers past events, whereas Gogo forgets them as soon as they have happened. Gogo is the weaker of the two, for he is repeatedly beaten every night by strange individuals. Didi is sometimes Gogo’s protector; he covers him with his coat and sings him to sleep. Both characters attempt to soothe their feelings of loneliness and hopelessness by embracing after the heated discussion of whether Godot will ever come and whether they are in the right place. . But this brief moment of mutual sympathy and affection is

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ephemeral: both men recoil back because Didi smells of garlic. This humorous incident is followed by their somber pondering of hanging themselves from the tree, which of course, they do not do. However, this idea is the consequence of their despair. Their opposing personalities cause their frequent bickering and often lead to the suggestion that perhaps it is better if they parted. Somehow, though they always manage to stay together waiting for Godot. It is possible that Didi and Gogo have been waiting for Godot, not for two days, but for years. This idea is further reinforced by the fact that at the end of the second act the same messenger boy who appears at the end of the first act to let them know that Godot won't come again, appears at the end of the second act to deliver the same message.

The other couple in the play, Pozzo and Lucky, reflects the master-slave relationship respectively. Lucky and Pozzo hold all the symbols of servitude and domination: a rope passed around Lecky's neck; Lucky carries a heavy bag, a folding stool, a picnic basket containing food and wine, and a coat—tools for Pozzo's comfort. Pozzo holds the whip. They also form a complementary relationship, but unlike Didi and Gogo's, Pozzo and Lucky's relationship is, by the time we meet them much deteriorated even though they have been together for nearly sixty years. There is no argument between them because Lucky only obeys his master's short and brisk commands: "Up pig." "Up hog." "Stool." "Basket" (Act 1). It's almost as if Pozzo were speaking to a trained dog or circus animal. Pozzo is abusive, both physically and verbally. It seems that Pozzo does not see Lucky as a human being like himself: It would be nice for him if he could find people like himself with whom he could socialize. "Yes, gentlemen, I cannot go for long without the society of my likes (he puts on his glasses and looks at the two likes)

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even when the likeness is an imperfect one” (Act 1). Pozzo offers a hint that Lucky might possess truly human qualities and feelings, unlike his master. Pozzo tells Didi and Gogo that it is Lucky who taught him about beauty and truth. We can get a glimpse of Lucky’s deep understanding of the flow of human existence as expressed by Pozzo, who admires his teachings but admits they are beyond him: “ The tears of the world are a constant quantity. For each one who begins to weep, somewhere else another stops. The same is true of the laugh” (Act1).

Pozzo’s selfishness is evident when he sits down to eat without making any attempt to share his meal with Did and Gogo. He shows no concern for Lucky’s well-being; he is indifferent to Lucky’s insistence on carrying the heavy bags, instead of putting them on the floor. In the first act Pozzo is rich, powerful and confident in himself. However, in the second act, Pozzo has gone blind, becoming more dependent on Lucky, who has now become dumb. As master Pozzo no longer has control of the situation; he has become even more attached to Lucky whom he previously wanted to sell at the fair despite the many years of service. These significant changes point to the passage of time. Like Didi and Gogo, Pozzo and Lucky do not have a past or clear future. Unlike Didi and Gogo, however, Pozzo and Lucky are able to leave, but only to return, defeated by the passage of time.

The idea that life is an absurd series of random events with no plausible explanation is illustrated throughout the play. In the first act, Pozzo comments that his comfortable position of privilege with regard to Lucky is only a matter of chance: “ Remark that I might just as well have been in his shoes and he in mine. If chance had not willed otherwise. To each one his due” (Act 1). Another illustration of this idea is seen in the second act when <https://assignbuster.com/free-literature-review-on-human-relationships-in/>

Gogo discovers that his boots are of a different color and that now they fit him perfectly. Neither Didi nor Gogo can provide a reasonable explanation for this. However, this idea is best expressed by Pozzo, exasperated by Didi and Gogo's questioning, bursts out saying that things, just happen all of a sudden whether or not they are just, and they are often inexplicable:

POZZO: suddenly furious.) Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? (Calmer.) They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more. (He jerks the rope.) On! (Act 2).

The wait for Godot is painful and boring to the point that the characters want to hang themselves from the tree, but they never do. Their search for the end of their journey leads them to humorous but fruitless conversations.

Their search for the end of their journey is also reflected in their acts. After Gogo succeeds in taking off his boot, he frantically turns it upside down, puts his hand inside as if he were hoping to find something inside. The scene of the hats in Act 2 is another example of this frantic search. After a few minutes of alternating an exchange of their hats and Lucky's hat which he left behind, Didi removes Lucky's hat, peers into it, shakes it, knocks it on the crown, and finally puts it on again. A similar repetitive act occurs in Act 1, when Lucky constantly takes out and puts away his vaporizer.

In spite of their desperate situation, a ray of hope shines for Didi and Gogo. Their constant bickering and frustrations with each other only draw them closer together. They cannot bring themselves to commit suicide. They want

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to give up Godot and leave the place, but they don't move at the end of Act 2. They agree to bring a stronger rope to hang themselves from the tree, unless, of course, Godot comes. Then they will be happy and they can rest at last from their long wait. Waiting for Godot speaks to everyone. Even if the structure of the play may seem baffling at first because of its peculiar structure, the play contains a powerful message. We are always waiting for something throughout the course of our lives: the arrival of an event, the encounter with a beloved person, the resolution of a difficult situation, even death. Thus, Godot symbolizes something different for everyone. It is this wait that makes the passage of time easier to bear.

## **Note**

Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*. Web. 10 April, 2014,  
< [http://samuel-beckett.net/Waiting\\_for\\_Godot\\_Part1.html](http://samuel-beckett.net/Waiting_for_Godot_Part1.html) >

## **Work Cited**

Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot*. Web. 10 April, 2014,  
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