

# Analysis of the setting in endgame



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The setting of Endgame is characteristic of a Beckett play; a décor reduced to the barest minimum. A naked stage, both a poetic symbol and a parody of traditional theater, with only two dust bins, a chair, and a backward painting to look at. High up on the walls we get an idea of the rest of Beckett's blank universe through to small windows looking out. "On these boards of disaster the characters play out their derisory role." (Fletcher, 48) Traditional theater attempts to put a slice of life out onto the stage for the audience's enjoyment. The general idea is to fool the audience into thinking that they are looking at something that they have seen before. For example, a roach infested apartment or even a relatively simple office scene helps one relate to the characters before they speak. We know what to expect because we are familiar with the plight of the starving artist with his dinky little flat and we already expect the businessman to be under a great deal of stress. Beckett sets his text in a place we've never been, and God willing, a place that will never exist: a bunker of sorts, that resembles the inside of a skull with its neuroses bickering inside. When the curtain opens on a place like that, the only thing you can do is start preparing yourself for what could possibly dwell in such a setting. The gap between the world we live in and the one before us has been established before any of the characters open their mouths and it up to us as an audience to figure out where we are. As we find out, slowly but surely, we are at the end of the world. Comedian Lewis Black claims he saw the end of the world in Texas when he found a street with a Starbucks directly across from another Starbucks, but Beckett made the end of the world the type of place where the question, "what time is it?" evokes the answer, "The same as usual." The action in this play, if one could call it that, is a Beckettian standard of people moving about the

<https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-the-setting-in-endgame/>

stage and talking for the sole purpose of quelling boredom. They talk and talk anticipating the arrival of death, and like Godot, the sweet release of death never comes (except for Nell who is the only one to ask the direct question, " Why this farce everyday?"). The only thing between these wretched characters and death is the mindless tedium of their lives. Clov knows as well as anyone else that there is nothing to see out on the horizon, but going to get the ladder, climbing up and down, and even dropping his spyglass on purpose helps to while away the hours of the day. What other possible reason other than warding off insanity would there be for telling the same joke over and over again. Not to mention recalling fondly the first time the joke was told before telling it. " The Beckettian hero is a sort of clown who uses words and performs gestures that are intended to be amusing, in order to pass the time. But unlike a real clown, he seeks not to amuse others, but to cheat his own boredom; he is acting, but for himself."

(Fletcher, 58) This is the type of world where a slow-moving half-starved man pushing a crippled old man's chair around in a circle is considered the action sequence. They have the same conversations over and over again, they muse about being forgotten by nature. It would seem that nature would have no part in the meaninglessness on stage, but they are confronted with the reality of nature continuing to age their bodies. Despite the absence of meaning they proceed with their monotonous lives. To offer explanation of this behavior Hamm says, " We do what we can," and Clov replies simply, " We shouldn't." Soon after, seemingly out of nowhere, Hamm asks in anguish, " What's happening, what's happening?" Clov refers to nature's persistence: " Something is taking its course." Clov then exits to the kitchen where he has maid plans to stare at the wall. As if the bare stage was not enough to

indicate that we are not witnessing real life, Clov looks to the auditorium and mentions seeing the audience. "A multitude...in transports...of joy." In that moment, Beckett tears down the fourth wall and a great deal of convention along with it. The suspension of disbelief requires that the audience give up their common sense to believe that they have been transported to another place and time. The audience pretends to be wherever the author has told them that they are and so the drama can unfold. When Clov spies the audience something special happens. This is no longer a play about four characters in a bunker, living their lives, waiting for the whole thing to take its course. Now it is a play about four actors, who are playing four characters in front of an audience. This is significant because in that instant Beckett achieves the level of absurdity for which he is worshiped by the performance artists of today. A play about people watching people wait to die, how absurd! Beckett created a world that had yet to exist. It was a world that was on a stage but it was not familiar to the theatergoers of the fifties. Beckett wrote plays that were aware that they were plays and in a way that seemed to bring his plays to life, however if they are indeed living, they are not all that animated. It makes one wonder about the nature of the play if the characters are aware that we are watching them. It is noted in the play that outside the shelter is death, since Clov needed a spyglass to see us, then we are most likely outside the shelter. Samuel Beckett was not a man to hand out false hopes. Works Cited Fletcher, John. Samuel Beckett's Art. Barnes & Noble Inc., New York, N. Y., 1967. Shaw, George Bernard. "Pygmalion." Modern Drama: Selected Plays from 1879 to the Present. 1st ed. Ed. Walter Levy. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1999. 93-137.