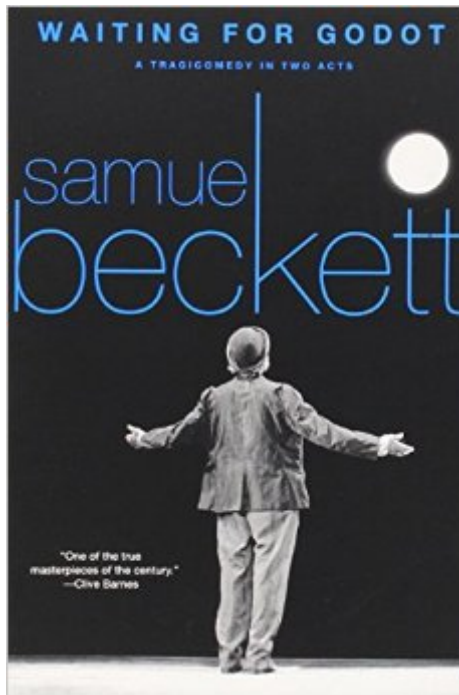


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Waiting For Godot: A Tragicomedy In Two Acts



Synopsis

From an inauspicious beginning at the tiny Left Bank Theatre de Babylone in 1953, followed by bewilderment among American and British audiences, *Waiting for Godot* has become one of the most important and enigmatic plays of the past fifty years and a cornerstone of twentieth-century drama. As Clive Barnes wrote, "Time catches up with genius" | *Waiting for Godot* is one of the masterpieces of the century. The story revolves around two seemingly homeless men waiting for someone "or something" named Godot. Vladimir and Estragon wait near a tree, inhabiting a drama spun of their own consciousness. The result is a comical wordplay of poetry, dreamscapes, and nonsense, which has been interpreted as mankind's inexhaustible search for meaning. Beckett's language pioneered an expressionistic minimalism that captured the existential post-World War II Europe. His play remains one of the most magical and beautiful allegories of our time.

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Customer Reviews

"Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!". That phrase, said by one of the main characters of *Waiting for Godot*, somehow sums up the whole plot of this short tragicomedy in two acts. Strange?? You can bet on that!!! So much that a well-known Irish critic said of it "nothing happens, twice". The play starts with two men, Vladimir and Estragon, sitting on a lonely road. They are both waiting for Godot. They don't know why they are waiting for him, but they think that his arrival will change things for the better. The problem is that he doesn't come, although a kid does so

and says Godot will eventually arrive. Pozzo and his servant Lucky, two other characters that pass by while our protagonists are waiting for Godot, add another bizarre touch to an already surreal story, in which nothing seems to happen and discussions between the characters don't make much sense. However, maybe that is exactly the point that Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) wanted to make. He was one of the most accomplished exponents of the "Theatre of the Absurd", that wanted to highlight the lack of purpose and meaning in an universe without God. Does Godot, the person that Vladimir and Estragon endlessly wait, symbolize God?. According to an irascible Beckett, when hard-pressed to answer that question, "If I knew who Godot was, I would have said so in the play." So, we don't know. The result is a highly unusual play that poses many questions, but doesn't answer them. Ripe with symbolism, "Waiting for Godot" is a play more or less open to different interpretations. Why more or less open?. Well, because in order to have an interpretation of your own, you have to finish the play, and that is something that not all readers can do.

Fifty years after its premiere, Samuel Beckett's play WAITING FOR GODOT has achieved classic status, yet it is a play more talked about than read or performed. Many people could tell the vague plot of two hobos waiting on a roadside for a man who never comes, a metaphor for the "waiting for God" that forms the duration of human existence, but much of the play remains unknown. Reading the play shows a different side of the play than popular imagination, though it will not be a rewarding activity for all. The stage is simple. "A country road. A Tree". So is the casting. The repartee of hobos Vladimir and Estragon forms the bulk of the play's dialogue. Two other men, Pozzo and Lucky, twice stop by. Finally a Boy appears as a messenger from the mysterious Godot. Pozzo and Lucky are left out of most popular references to the play, but they form a vital part of its action. When we first meet Pozzo, he is a rich man, smoking a pipe, feasting on a whole chicken... and leading his servant Lucky around with a rope and barking orders at him. The choreographical duties imposed on Lucky are a tour de force of stage writing. While drama is written to be performed, the text of WAITING FOR GODOT allows one to pick up on various subtleties missing from performance. One is amusing stage directions. When Vladimir says "I don't understand" and Estragon replies, "Use your intelligence, can't you?", there follows the direction "Vladimir uses his intelligence." In the theatre, many of the play's most profound comments come too quickly to be properly reflected upon and digested by the audience, but reading the play lets one proceed through Beckett's musings at one's own pace.

Samuel Beckett's play seems to endlessly perplex reviewers: they want to see in it concrete

associations that it generally denies them. Is Godot God? Are Didi and Gogo heroes for their seemingly indefatigable faith he will arrive, or fools for hinging all their hopes and dreams on a man who never seems to arrive to help alleviate their suffering? Waiting for Godot, in proper Modernist fashion, strips away all the layers of narrative and form and leaves nothing but the naked husk of a play, which Beckett no doubt felt revealed the human condition at its most basic. But the play's power doesn't really come from that. Rather, what makes Waiting for Godot so compelling is its wide applicability: it's a story about random oppression, brutality, and dreams deferred by harsh realities. It has been performed as an allegory of apartheid South Africa, the Jim Crow South, the horror of the war in Bosnia and about every other possible situation imaginable. Why? Because as Benjamin Kunkel pointed out in a piece in The New Yorker not so long ago, "[N]ot everyone has a God, but who doesn't have a Godot?" Beyond the metaphysical implications of the play, though, its popularity stems from its near-perfection: for all the philosophical meaning people see in it, the action progresses with virtually no direct reference to it, and every line which seems to suggest some sort of grand significance has a very concrete meaning in the action. Take the infamous opening: Estragon, the first of the tramps, struggles to pull off his boot to relieve his swollen foot. Unable to get it off, he gives up and announces "Nothing to be done."

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