

Absurdity in *Waiting For Godot*

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The play *Waiting For Godot* by Samuel Beckett portrays two aimless characters in a world of alienation and no meaning. The absurdity of the situation of the characters arises from their hope for a meaningful life. This possibility of hope that never arrives leads to humor as well as tragedy.

Beckett presents religious salvation as a false hope. Vladimir and Estragon are wanderers on a bare country road that symbolizes life. They wait for Godot symbolizing God or anything that is awaited with anticipation, under a dead tree as barren as the lives they lead. Instead of Godot, every day a messenger boy arrives to inform them that Godot will come the next day. The boy is a messenger of the hope that sustains Vladimir and Estragon.

Vladimir and Estragon are outcasts from society in their fruitless wait. In their boredom, they pass the time with endless philosophical discussions and repetitive conversations that have no purpose. Vladimir, the philosopher, finds Biblical allusions to the crucifixion and the parables that allow him to start a conversation for lack of anything else to say. Estragon continues whatever Vladimir begins by repeating what has already been said. The absurdity of the circular dialogue is humorous and yet tragic. Vladimir and Estragon have wasted their entire lives on this ridiculous banter in their interminable wait for Godot.

Pozzo and Lucky, two other travelers on the road of life, always appear at the same time every day. While Vladimir and Estragon do not belong in any stratum of society, Pozzo and Lucky clearly represent the domination of the lower classes by the upper class. Pozzo, the power-hungry authoritarian, flaunts his superiority over Lucky, the oppressed slave who does not even know he is oppressed. In fact, Lucky considers himself “lucky” to be bound to someone who can make decisions for him. In Act II, Pozzo has become blind and Lucky has become dumb. Pozzo’s blindness symbolizes his blindness to his cruelty and his own conformity to society’s rules. Previously, Lucky could still think and speak, although only when ordered by Pozzo. Now he has lost even the ability to speak out.

Like Pozzo and Lucky, Vladimir and Estragon are trapped in their current situation. Vladimir and Estragon have ceased to move on their journey through life. Instead of continuing on, they wait for Godot in one place. Pozzo and Lucky are not stationary, but they only travel in circles. After a day’s journey, they return to where they began, never reaching any destination.

Every morning, when Vladimir and Estragon return to the dead tree where they wait, they seem to begin anew. Estragon never remembers the events of the previous day at all, and Vladimir has only a vague idea that similar events occurred before. Pozzo and Lucky, when they pass in their daily routine, do not recall ever encountering Vladimir and Estragon before, and the messenger boy always insists that it is the first time he has been sent.

Vladimir and Estragon never realize the need to change because they never remember the daily mistakes they make. Every day Estragon decides that he and Vladimir should part, yet both are afraid to be alone. Vladimir and Estragon resolve to hang themselves, but they always delay. By the next day, nothing has altered. As Estragon declares in Act I, there is “Nothing to be done,” when these two tramps have actually not tried to do anything. Perhaps Godot fails to appear because Vladimir and Estragon have not given him any reason to come.

In spite of all their waiting, Vladimir and Estragon are not even sure if Godot exists. Although the boy describes Godot as having a white beard and flocks of sheep and goats, he may never have seen Godot; the typical portrayal of God depicts a wise, dignified man with a white beard who sends his son, Jesus, to be a shepherd of men. Vladimir and Estragon force themselves into the belief that Godot will one day come and save them, as Estragon forces his foot into a boot that does not fit. Tragically, they do not realize that Godot’s elusiveness is a result of their own inactivity. As Vladimir says, “There’s man for you, blaming on his boots the fault of his feet.” Vladimir and Estragon cannot spend the rest of their lives waiting for Godot, since they must each find Godot for himself. Samuel Beckett’s play *Waiting For Godot* is an allegory of modern man’s wait for personal salvation. To achieve their goals, people must take action instead of wait passively for fulfillment to arrive on its own. No matter what Godot represents, no one should wait for him; Godot is waiting inside everyone.