



# WAITING FOR GODOT

by Samuel Beckett

# What are you waiting...?

...to happen in your life in 40 minutes?

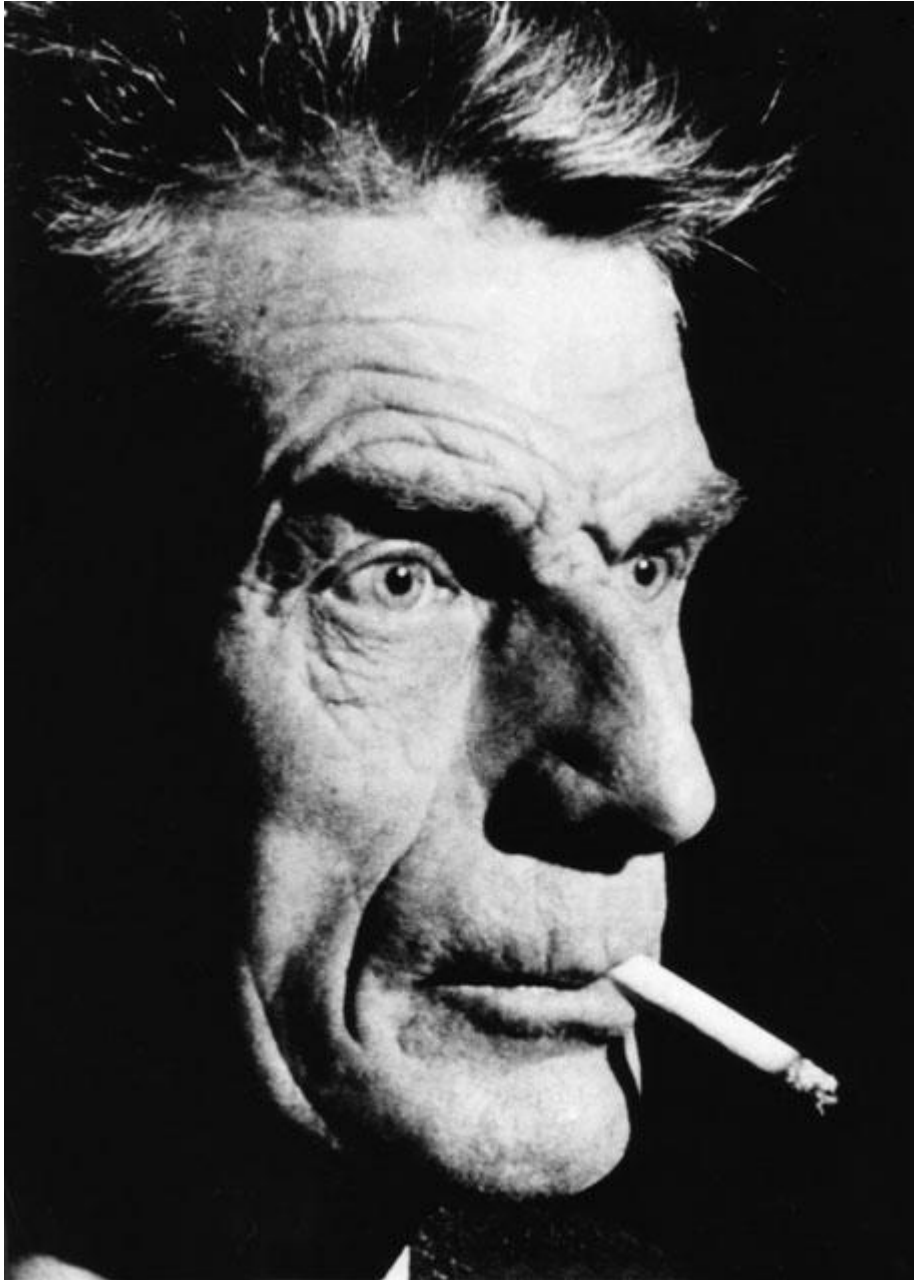
...to happen in your life in a week?

...to happen in your life in 3 years?

...to happen in your life in 10 years?

...to happen in your life in 30 years?

Life is essentially waiting for something.



# Samuel Barclay Beckett

(possibly April 13, 1906 –  
December 22, 1989)

absurdist Irish playwright,  
novelist and poet.  
Although Beckett insisted  
he was born on Good  
Friday, April 13, 1906, his  
birth certificate puts the  
date a month later.

# Education

- studied French, Italian and English at Trinity College, Dublin from 1923 to 1927
- massive influence was James Joyce
- 1929 he published his first work, a critical essay defending Joyce's work
- major influence: René Descartes (René Descartes was a French philosopher, mathematician and writer who spent most of his life in the Dutch Republic' lived in 1500s)
- In 1930, he returned to Trinity College as a lecturer
- left after less than two years, and began to travel throughout Europe
- spent time in London, publishing his critical study of Proust there in 1931
- two years of Jungian psychotherapy



# Career

- Taught in Paris
- writing career, secretarial duties for James Joyce
- World War II, Beckett in Paris, even after it had become occupied by the Germans. He joined the underground movement and fought for the resistance until 1942 when several members of his group were arrested and he was forced to flee with his French-born wife to the unoccupied zone
- In 1945, after it had been liberated from the Germans, he returned to Paris and began his most prolific period as a writer
- Beckett was the first of the absurdists to win international fame
- works translated into over twenty languages
- continued to write until his death in 1989, but the task grew more and more difficult with each work until, in the end, he said that each word seemed to him "an unnecessary stain on silence and nothingness."

# Theatrical Concept, Style

- Beckett's theatre is stark, minimalist, and deeply pessimistic about human nature and the human situation
- explores his themes in increasingly cryptic style
- Beckett was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1969
- Themes in plays include suffering, waiting, dependence, physical and spiritual condition, madness, and being needed
- trades in plot, characterization, and final solution, which had hitherto been the hallmarks of drama, for a series of concrete stage images (ie..it's weird)
- language is useless, for he creates a mythical universe peopled by lonely creatures who struggle vainly to express what is impossible to express
- characters exist in a terrible dreamlike vacuum, overcome by an overwhelming sense of bewilderment and grief, grotesquely attempting some form of communication, then crawling on, endlessly

# Theater of the Absurd

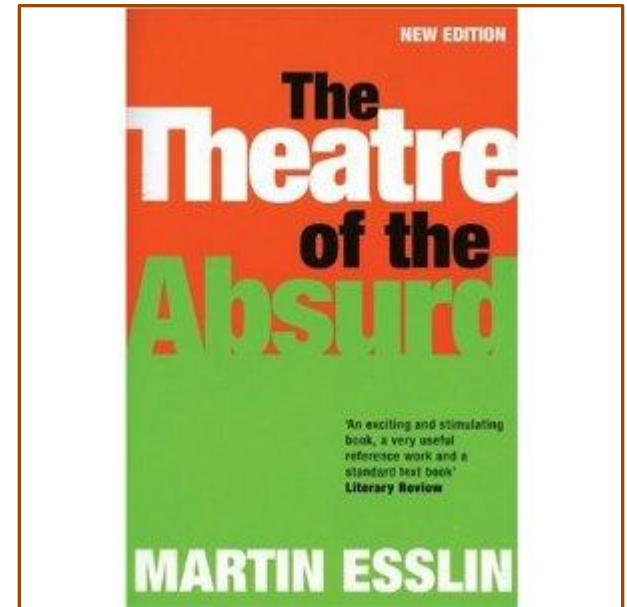
- follows the concepts of existential philosophy
- The theatrical style aims to show a world where man is born with only himself and nothing else (no God).

So, it means {and keep in mind} :

**GODOT IS NOT GOD, BUT WHATEVER IT IS ONE WAITS  
FOR**

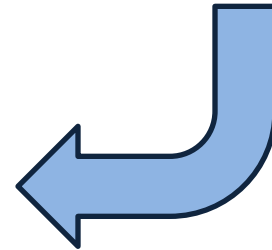
# Theater of the Absurd?? What???

Critic [Martin Esslin](#) coined the term "Theatre of the Absurd" in his 1960 essay and, later, a book of the same name. He related these plays based on a broad theme of the Absurd.



The Absurd in these plays takes the form of man's reaction to a world apparently without meaning, and/or man as a puppet controlled or menaced by invisible outside forces.

**KEEP IN MIND**





# For Your Information

## Repetition of theatre of the absurd characteristics in other plays

- **Broad comedy mixed with horrific or tragic images.**
- **Characters caught in hopeless situations forced to do repetitive or meaningless actions.**
- **Dialogue full of clichés, wordplay, and nonsense.**
- **Either a parody or dismissal of realism and the concept of the well-made play.**
- **The Theatre of the Absurd shows the failure of man without recommending a solution.**

# Some characteristics you should observe when reading the play!

Often Absurdist works utilize theatrical conventions such as:

- Mime
- Gibberish
- Heightened Language
- Vignette\*

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\* short, impressionistic scenes that focus on one moment or give a particular insight into a character, idea, or setting.

# Let's conclude this theoretical part

Plays within this group are absurd in that they focus not on logical acts, realistic occurrences, or traditional character development; they, instead, focus on human beings trapped in an incomprehensible world subject to any occurrence, no matter how illogical. The theme of incomprehensibility is coupled with the inadequacy of language to form meaningful human connections. According to Martin Esslin, Absurdism is "the inevitable devaluation of ideals, purity, and purpose. Absurdist drama asks its viewer to draw his own conclusions, make his own errors". Though Theatre of the Absurd may be seen as nonsense, it has something to say and can be understood. Esslin makes a distinction between the dictionary definition of absurd ("out of harmony" in the musical sense) and drama's understanding of the Absurd: "Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose.... Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless".

To existentialist writers, the universe is a foreign and indifferent place. Every aspect of creation, including the universe itself, is pitted against the individual. Existence is meaningless and oblivion both before birth and after death- save for the fact that great suffering and anguish- mark the plight in between these ends.



Although very existentialist in its characterizations, [Waiting for Godot](#) is primarily about hope. The play revolves around [Vladimir](#) and [Estragon](#) and their pitiful wait for hope to arrive. At various times during the play, hope is constructed as a form of salvation, in the characters of [Pozzo](#) and [Lucky](#), or even as death. The subject of the play quickly becomes an example of how to pass the time in a situation which offers no hope.

Thus the theme of the play is set by the beginning:



*Estragon: Nothing to be done.*

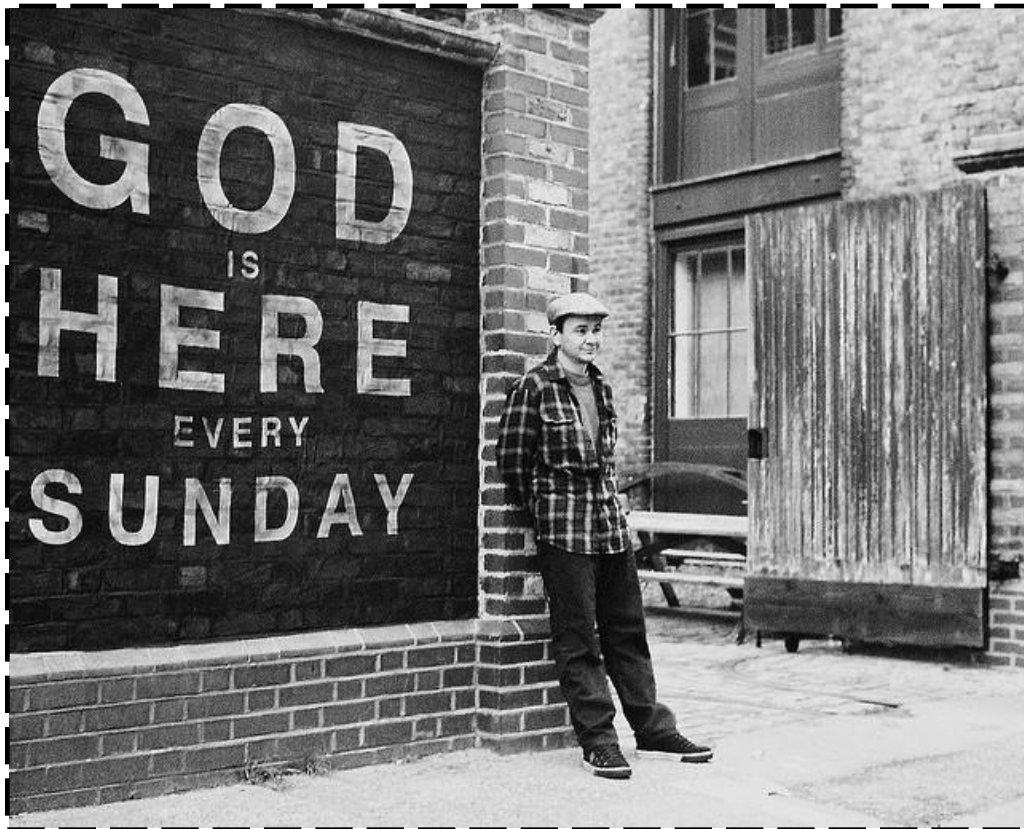
*Vladimir: I'm beginning to come round to that opinion.*

Although the phrase is used in connection to Estragon's boots, it is also later used by Vladimir with respect to his hat. Essentially it describes the hopelessness of their lives.



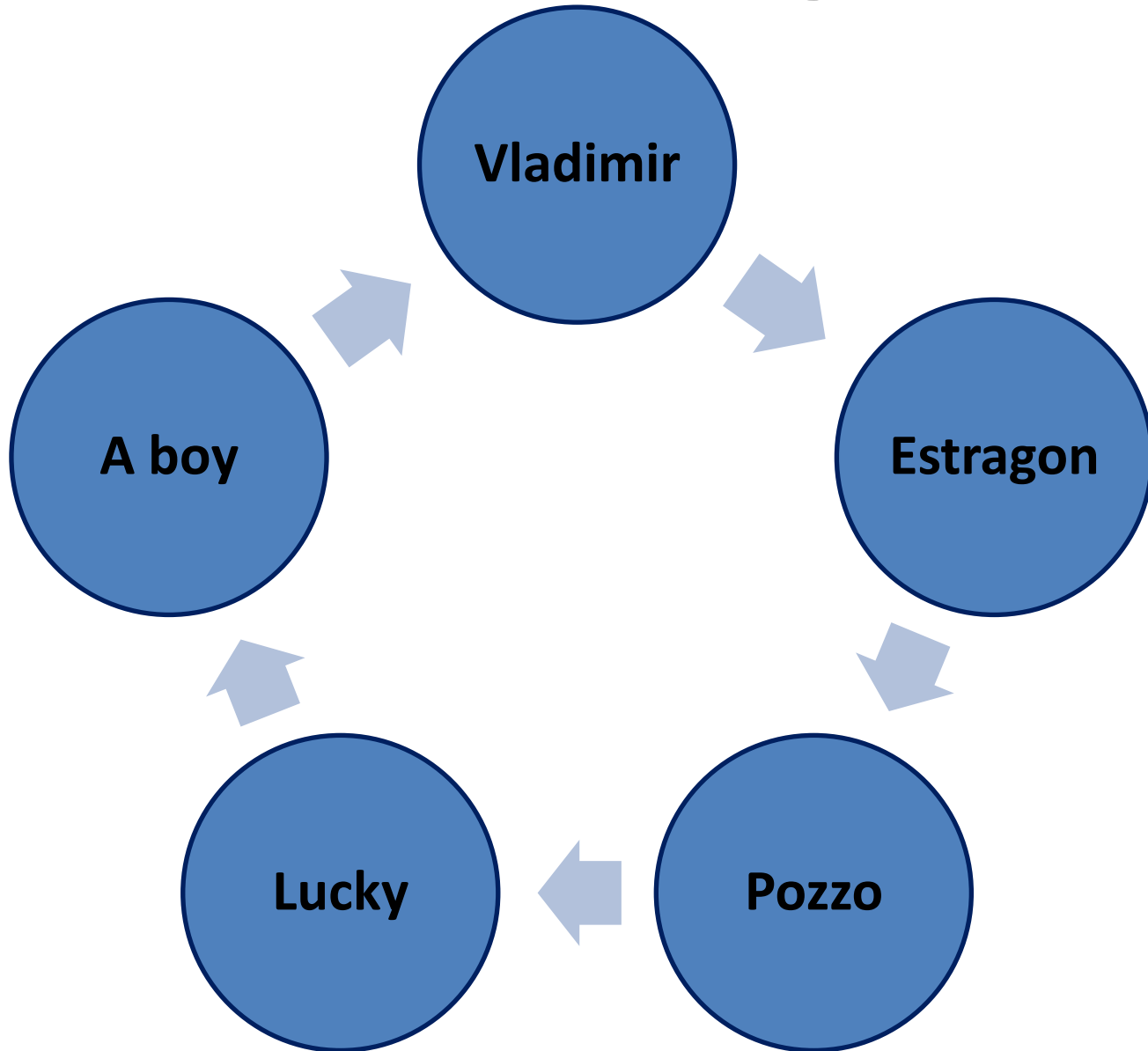
A direct result of this hopelessness is the daily struggle to pass the time. Thus, most of the play is dedicated to devising games which will help them pass the time. This mutual desire also addresses the question of why they stay together. Both Vladimir and Estragon admit to being happier when apart. One of the main reasons that they continue their relationship is that they need one another to pass the time.

Beckett is believed to have said that the name Godot comes from the French "godillot" meaning a military boot. Beckett fought in the war and so spending long periods of time waiting for messages to arrive would have been commonplace for him. The more common interpretation that it might mean "God." It could be, but Godot is whatever it is a person waits for.





# CHARACTERS





**Estragon**

**Vladimir**

**Lucky**

**Pozzo**

# Works Cited

I modified and combined several online presentations to create this ppt for you.

[www.smhs.org/...ppt/WFG%20PPT](http://www.smhs.org/...ppt/WFG%20PPT)

[www.slideshare.net/Bruno2099/waiting-for-godot-23461392](http://www.slideshare.net/Bruno2099/waiting-for-godot-23461392)