

**Tikrit University**

**College of Education for Humanities**

**English Department**

**Fourth Grade**



## **An Introduction of Waiting for Godot Play**

**Compiled by : Dr. Luhaib Hamid Khalaf**

### **Brief Biography of Samuel Beckett**

Samuel Beckett grew up in Dublin and attended Trinity College, Dublin, where he studied French, English, and Italian. After graduating, he taught in Paris, where he met fellow modernist Irish writer James Joyce and worked on both critical and creative writings. He moved back to Ireland in 1930, when he took up a job as a lecturer at Trinity College. He soon quit the job, though, in 1931, and traveled around Europe, continuing to write. He moved to Paris in 1937, stayed there when World War II began in 1939, and joined French Resistance forces when the Nazis occupied the country. Meanwhile, he continued to write, including a trilogy of well-known novels (*Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*). But it was for his experimental plays that he would become best known, especially *Waiting for Godot*, which premiered in Paris (in its original French) in 1953. This was followed by more plays, including the equally experimental [\*Endgame\*](#). Beckett's literary reputation and acclaim steadily improved in the 1960s, and he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969 (he gave away the prize money.) Beckett died in 1989 and was buried in Paris along with his wife.

### **Historical Context of *Waiting for Godot***

The play is set in a strange, unspecified time, and does not take place in the context of any historical events, but many have seen the widespread suffering and disillusionment caused by World War II in the background of the play's pessimistic, nihilistic conception of the world.

## Key Facts about *Waiting for Godot*

- **Full Title:** *Waiting for Godot: A Tragicomedy in Two Acts*
- **When Written:** 1948-1949
- **Where Written:** Paris
- **When Published:** 1954
- **Literary Period:** Modernism, Postmodernism
- **Genre:** Drama, Tragicomedy (a mixture of tragedy and comedy), Theater of the Absurd
- **Setting:** The side of an unidentified road, near a tree, at an unspecified time.
- **Climax:** Beckett's play essentially lacks a climax. Vladimir and Estragon spend both acts waiting for the arrival of Godot, but Godot never comes.
- **Antagonist:** While Vladimir and Estragon speak of an anonymous "they" who threaten to beat them and from whom they must hide, there is no real antagonist in the play. Part of the characters' predicament is that there is no precise cause or origin of the suffering and alienation they feel.

## Extra Credit for *Waiting for Godot*

**En Attendant Godot.** Beckett originally wrote *Waiting for Godot* in French (under the equivalent title, *En Attendant Godot*). He said that writing in French made it easier to write in the blank, plain style for which the play is famous. Beckett later personally translated the play into English.

**Waiting for Whom?** While Godot is such an important part of the play, there is widespread disagreement over the correct pronunciation of his name. Some opt for stressing the first syllable ("GOD-oh"), which emphasizes the name's link to God, while others choose to stress the second ("god-OH").

## Waiting for Godot Summary

**Vladimir** and **Estragon** wait at the side of a road, near a tree, agreeing that there is "nothing to be done." Estragon struggles to take off one of his boots. Vladimir asks if Estragon has ever read the Bible. Estragon says all he remembers are some colored maps of the holy land. Vladimir tells Estragon about the two thieves crucified along with Jesus. One of the gospels says that one of the thieves was saved, but Vladimir wonders if this is true. Estragon wants to leave, but Vladimir reminds him that they have to wait here for **Godot**. Estragon and Vladimir debate whether they are in the right place and whether it is the right day for Godot to come. Estragon falls asleep and Vladimir immediately wakes him, saying he was lonely without him. Estragon starts to describe his dream, but Vladimir angrily stops him and tells him to keep his nightmares to himself.

Vladimir wonders what he and Estragon should do, and Estragon says they should continue to wait. While waiting, Estragon suggests they hang themselves on the tree. The two disagree over who should hang himself first, though, and Vladimir concludes that they should just wait for Godot. Estragon asks what Vladimir asked Godot for and Vladimir says that he made a vague sort of prayer. Estragon is hungry, and Vladimir offers him a carrot. All he can find in his pockets, though, are turnips. Finally, he finds a carrot and gives it to Estragon. Estragon asks if they are "tied" to Godot and Vladimir says that they are. The two are interrupted by a loud scream off-stage.

**Vladimir** and **Estragon** wait at the side of a road, near a tree, agreeing that there is "nothing to be done." Estragon struggles to take off one of his boots. Vladimir asks if Estragon has ever read the Bible. Estragon says all he remembers are some colored maps of the holy land. Vladimir tells Estragon about the two thieves crucified along with Jesus. One of the gospels says that one of the thieves was saved, but Vladimir wonders if this is true. Estragon wants to leave, but Vladimir reminds him that they have to wait here for **Godot**. Estragon and Vladimir debate whether they are in the right place and whether it is the right day for Godot to come. Estragon falls asleep and Vladimir immediately wakes him, saying he was lonely without him. Estragon starts to describe his dream, but Vladimir angrily stops him and tells him to keep his nightmares to himself.

Vladimir wonders what he and Estragon should do, and Estragon says they should continue to wait. While waiting, Estragon suggests they hang themselves on the tree. The two disagree over who should hang himself first, though, and Vladimir concludes that they should just wait for Godot. Estragon asks what Vladimir asked Godot for and Vladimir says that he made a vague sort of prayer. Estragon is hungry, and Vladimir offers him a carrot. All he can find in his pockets, though, are turnips. Finally, he finds a carrot and gives it to Estragon. Estragon asks if they are "tied" to Godot and Vladimir says that they are. The two are interrupted by a loud scream off-stage.

**Pozzo** and **Lucky** enter. Pozzo drives Lucky forward with a whip like a pack animal, with a rope tied around his neck. Lucky is forced to carry Pozzo's things. Estragon asks if this is Godot, but then Pozzo introduces himself. He jerks the rope that is around Lucky's neck and calls him "pig." Lucky brings him his stool and some food. Pozzo eats some chicken and Estragon begs him for the leftover bones. Pozzo gives him the bones. Vladimir is outraged at Pozzo's horrible treatment of Lucky and wants to leave. Pozzo tells him to stay, though, in case Godot should show up. Estragon asks why Lucky doesn't put down his bags. Pozzo says that Lucky has the right to put them down and be comfortable, so he must be carrying them because he wants to. He says that Lucky is trying to impress Pozzo so he won't get rid of him, because Pozzo has plenty of slaves. Pozzo says he plans to sell Lucky at a fair. Lucky begins to cry and Pozzo gives Estragon a handkerchief to bring to him. Estragon approaches Lucky and Lucky kicks him violently in the shin.

Pozzo then begins to cry, saying that he "can't bear it." Vladimir scolds Lucky for making his master cry. Pozzo collects himself and looks for his pipe, which he has misplaced. He makes a speech about night and twilight, then asks if there's anything he can do for Estragon and Vladimir, since they have been nice to him. He offers to make Lucky dance, recite, sing, or think for their entertainment. Lucky dances and his hat falls off. Pozzo says that Lucky needs his **hat** to think, so Vladimir places it back on Lucky's head and Lucky launches into a long, rambling monologue. Pozzo prepares to leave and says goodbye to Vladimir and Estragon, but doesn't move.

Pozzo and Lucky eventually leave, and Estragon wants to leave as well, but Vladimir tells him they need to stay and wait for Godot. A **boy** comes onstage, bearing a message from Godot. He says Godot will not come today, but will come the next day. He tells

Vladimir that he works for Godot, minding his goats, and says that Godot is a good master. The boy leaves and Estragon and Vladimir are ready to leave for the night. They say they are going to leave, but stay still. The first act ends.

The second act begins the next day, in the same location and at the same time. Vladimir enters and sings. Estragon enters and tells Vladimir that he was beaten the previous night for no reason. Vladimir and Estragon embrace, happy to see each other again, and Estragon asks what they should do. Vladimir tells him they should wait for Godot. Vladimir mentions Pozzo and Lucky, and Estragon doesn't remember who these people are. He also doesn't recognize the place where they are waiting from the day before. Vladimir says that he and Estragon picked grapes for the same man a long time ago in "the Macon country," but Estragon doesn't remember this, either.

After a long silence, Vladimir asks Estragon to talk about anything to fill the silence, but the two struggle to find something to talk about. Vladimir asks if Estragon really doesn't remember Lucky and Pozzo. Estragon remembers someone kicking him and remembers the chicken bones he got from Pozzo. Vladimir offers Estragon a radish or turnip, because he has no carrots. Estragon falls asleep but then wakes up startled. He begins to tell Vladimir about his dream but Vladimir interrupts him and tells him not to describe the dream. Estragon wants to leave, but Vladimir reminds him that they have to stay and wait for Godot. Vladimir notices Lucky's **hat** lying on the ground and tries it on. He and Estragon trade their hats and Lucky's **hat** back and forth, trying different ones on. Vladimir wants to "play at Pozzo and Lucky," and he and Estragon pretend to be the two characters.

Estragon leaves the stage for a moment and then returns and says that "they" are coming. He and Vladimir hold lookouts at either end of the stage. After insulting each other, they make up and embrace. Pozzo and Lucky enter. Pozzo is now blind, following closely behind Lucky. Lucky stops when he sees Vladimir and Estragon, and Pozzo bumps into him. They both fall to the ground and Pozzo cannot get up. Vladimir and Estragon consider trying to get something out of Pozzo for helping him up. Pozzo cries out for help and offers money in return for any assistance. Vladimir decides to help Pozzo up but falls over himself in the process. Estragon tries to help Vladimir up, but falls down in the process. None of the characters are able to get up for a while, but

Estragon suddenly suggests that he and Vladimir try to stand up and they are able to get up easily.

Estragon again wants to leave, but Vladimir tells him to keep waiting. He suggests they help Pozzo to get up in the meantime. They stand Pozzo up, and he asks who they are, not remembering either of them from the previous day. Pozzo asks what time it is and Estragon thinks it's morning, while Vladimir is sure that it's evening. Vladimir asks when Pozzo went blind, and Pozzo says that "the blind have no notion of time." He asks Estragon to check on Lucky. Estragon goes over to Lucky and kicks him repeatedly. Pozzo shouts, "Up pig!" and yanks on Lucky's rope. The two leave the stage, as Estragon falls asleep. Vladimir wakes Estragon, saying he was lonely.

Just like the day before, a boy enters with a message from Godot, that he will not come this day but will certainly come the next. Vladimir asks the boy what Godot does and the boy says Godot does nothing. Vladimir asks the boy to tell Godot that he saw Vladimir. The boy leaves. Estragon wants to go far away, but Vladimir says they can't go far, as they have to come back here tomorrow and wait for Godot. Estragon suggests they hang themselves on the tree using his belt, but when they test the belt's strength by pulling on either end, it breaks. Vladimir and Estragon prepare to leave for the night. They say they are going to leave, but neither moves.