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Fourth Grade



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Waiting for Godot

Important Quotes Act 1

"We can't ... We're waiting for Godot."

— *Vladimir, Act 1 (Estragon and Vladimir)*

Vladimir's reply to Estragon, who wants to get up and leave with his friend, is repeated numerous times throughout the play. It perfectly encapsulates their situation: they cannot leave because of hope that this Godot will appear and "save" them. However, he never comes, trapping them in endless waiting.

"What exactly did we ask [Godot] for? ... A kind of prayer."

— *Estragon, Act 1 (Estragon and Vladimir)*

Vladimir and Estragon don't really remember what they asked Godot; it may not have even been a defined request, which calls into question the value of any answer they could get in return. None of that, however, is going to stop them from waiting forever for the answer. The description of their request as a prayer seems to indicate they are seeking a larger meaning to existence. That an answer never comes strongly indicates that no such meaning exists.

"We got rid of them."

— *Vladimir, Act 1 (Estragon and Vladimir)*

When Estragon asks whether he and Vladimir have lost their rights, Vladimir gives an uncharacteristic reply: Vladimir often blames Godot's restrictions on why they can't leave, such as claiming he will punish them for dropping him. Here, however, he seems to recognize, at least for a minute, that they are the only ones restricting what they can and cannot do.

"The tears of the world are a constant quantity."

— *Pozzo, Act 1 (Lucky and Pozzo Arrive)*

Observing that Estragon begins to weep as Lucky stops, Pozzo pronounces this pompous conclusion. He even goes on to say that laughter is the same way. This statement sounds profound but is actually ridiculous—there is no restriction on the number of people in the world who can cry or laugh at the same time—pointing out the meaninglessness of philosophical "truths."

"Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!"

— *Estragon, Act 1 (Lucky Thinks)*

Estragon breaks out this extremely accurate summary of their circumstances, and indeed the whole play, as they wait for Lucky to begin thinking. It's a bit absurd that he chooses a time when someone has actually come and something is about to happen to complain about nothing happening and nobody coming, but it doesn't diminish the larger truth of his statement.

"They all change. Only we can't."

— *Estragon, Act 1 (A Boy with a Message)*

After Lucky and Pozzo leave, Vladimir comments that they have changed since the last time he saw them. Indeed, when

they return in Act 2, they have changed significantly again. Estragon, however, correctly observes that he and Vladimir remain essentially the same throughout the play, and presumably beyond. Estragon suggests they are incapable of change, which doesn't bode well for their chances of eventually giving up waiting for Godot.

Important Quotes Act 2

"All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud! And you talk to me about scenery!"

— *Estragon, Act 2 (Vladimir and Estragon Return)*

Mud here does not signify degradation or immorality, but rather total stultifying uniformity. Vladimir is trying to remind Estragon how the tree looked "yesterday," but, to a man for whom all places are indistinguishable, such details of scenery are meaningless, and even angering.

"We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?"

— *Estragon, Act 2 (Conversation Kills Time)*

Estragon considers, at least for a moment, the possibility that they don't actually exist and that all their struggles are simply to give themselves the impression that they do. Vladimir, in particular, is concerned with making the uncertain concrete, attempting to define the passing of time. What they are waiting for from Godot might be recognition of their existence. Because Godot never comes, their existence remains uncertain.

"But at this place, at this moment ... all mankind is us, whether we like it or not."

— *Vladimir, Act 2 (Lucky and Pozzo Return)*

When Pozzo and Lucky fall down, Vladimir and Estragon are the only ones around to help them. They at this moment are representing all of humanity and, as such, they have a responsibility to help. This is by far the most humanitarian impulse displayed by anyone in the play. (Its characters are usually focused on their own pains and struggles.) The results, however, are less than inspiring. When Vladimir and Estragon try to help Pozzo get up, they also fall and get stuck on the Ground.

"We are all born mad. Some remain so."

— *Estragon, Act 2 (Lucky and Pozzo Return)*

Vladimir has been trying to determine whether the waiting is making them lose their reason, but Estragon goes straight to the heart of the matter. Everyone is born mad (meaning crazy, or without reason), and some never escape it. Despite all of Vladimir's thinking and reasoning, he and Estragon may not have escaped the madness of existence. Of course, the audience realizes their endless waiting is crazy and completely without reason.

"They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more."

— *Pozzo, Act 2 (Lucky and Pozzo Return)*

Unlike Vladimir, Pozzo doesn't care about time, claiming he has no concept of it since he has gone blind. He sees existences flashing nearly instantaneously from life (represented by light) to death (represented by night), with nothing in between.

"The air is full of our cries. ... But habit is a great deadener."

— *Vladimir, Act 2 (Different Boy, Same Message)*

Vladimir continues Pozzo's birth-to-grave metaphor, except he includes that humans have more time for suffering, demonstrated by the cries in the air, between birth and the grave. But habit deadens the pain of living. That might seem like a good thing, but habit is also one of the major forces keeping Vladimir and Estragon in a limbo of waiting.