



[Waiting for Godot](#), by Samuel Beckett

In A Nutshell

Waiting for Godot, published by Samuel Beckett in 1949, is a play in which two characters are waiting for someone who never comes. If you wanted to impress someone, you would say *Waiting for Godot* is an absurdist play that explores themes of existentialist philosophy. The sheer emptiness and randomness of the plot causes the audience (or reader) to wonder if anything is going to happen, and whether there is any meaning in anything in the play – or in life.

Samuel Beckett originally wrote the play in French, with the title *En attendant Godot*. (Two guesses what that means in French.) The work was revolutionary for what it lacked: real plot, discernible character development, and any sort of adherence to dramatic traditions. It was a hit – everyone loves a rebel – and the play became a cornerstone of "Le Théâtre de l'Absurde," or Theatre of the Absurd, a dramatic body of work largely defined by the characteristic traits of *Godot*.

Beckett himself translated the play into English – his first language – shortly after, and the play's success continued. The amount of criticism spawned by *Godot* is staggering and revolves both around the play's literary merits and its value as a philosophical work. In 1969 Beckett was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for his revolutionary contribution to drama and literature.

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Big Picture Study Questions

- 1 Do the men in *Waiting for Godot* have any sort of character arcs? Do they evolve at all, or learn anything, or change in any way from the beginning to the end of the play?
- 2 Why discuss philosophical ideas in a work of fiction instead of a treatise?
- 3 If it 's true that nothing or less than nothing happens in *Waiting for Godot*, how is it that we manage to be entertained as the audience/reader?

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