

# UNIT- V

## WAITING FOR GODOT

Samuel Beckett

### **Introduction:**

Waiting for Godot is a new species of drama, different from the other plays. It is quite a difficult play and its meaning cannot be explained easily. Different critics interpret it in different ways. The play has a wide spread appeal and both the intellectuals and average persons have found something in the play.

### **Picture of humanity:**

Estragon and Vladimir, Pozzo and Lucky, the four characters in the play present humanity at large. Vladimir and Estragon are the two parts of a person or of a community seen subjectively. Vladimir represents the spiritual part of a person while Estragon represents the animal part. So also Lucky and Pozzo make up a person seen objectively. Pozzo and Lucky present the social surface of life. The play exposes the attempts of the human beings to fiddle through life. The characters wait for Godot who never appears on the stage.

### **Picture of the meaninglessness of life:**

The two tramps, while waiting for Godot kill the time by doing trivial activities. They are bored to the extent of coming to end their lives. All this shows the hollowness and insincerity of social intercourse. The play shows that life is devoid of action. The two tramps are merely alive but they are not living in the world. Like them most of the people in this world continue their living despite of the meaninglessness.

**Presentation of painful waiting, ignorance, impotence and**



### **boredom:**

Estragon and Vladimir wait endlessly for Godot. But they do not know who or what Godot is. They are ignorant and they do not know what would happen if they stopped waiting. Like this two tramps people in the world go on waiting for something or the other without getting it. But Vladimir hopes if Godot comes, they will be saved. In spite of the boredom and pain, most of the people in the world go through life by force of habit and their daily activities are similar to the meaningless action of Estragon.

### **Presentation of suffering:**

The characters on the whole, in the play suffer all through. They have no pleasant past to recall. They undergo the pain of suffering while waiting for Godot endlessly. So, the play portrays suffering as an inseparable part of life.

### **Themes intermingled:**

The two tramps wait for Godot with the hope that when he comes they will be saved. This expresses the Christian belief of the next world. Some critics feel that the theme of the play is disintegration of human beings and regression of man's intelligence. Some others are of the opinion that the world presented in the play is France occupied by the Germans during the second world War and the play reminds the French Resistance organized by the underground workers.

### **Conclusion:**

The play, "Waiting for Godot" may mean mankind's wait for Messiah. On the whole it exposes man's tragic condition. It has a timeless validity and universality. As Becket himself has said 'Waiting for Godot' means different things to different people. The themes have wide richness of meaning and implication and the play ends with note of hope.



# CHARACTER SKETCHES

## VLADIMIR

### **Introduction**

Vladimir is one of the two important characters in the play, 'Waiting for Godot'. Nothing material happens in the play, so Vladimir and the other tramp, Estragon simply idle away their time waiting for Godot.

### **Vladimir's nature:**

He is kind and affectionate to Estragon. He covers Estragon with his coat in order to protect him from cold. When Estragon insists on them being separated, he does not want to do so because he knows that Estragon cannot defend himself. He does not allow him to go bare footed. Such is his concern for his partner.

### **Vladimir's Intelligence:**

Vladimir thinks more and is more intellectual and cultured than Estragon. He quotes latin and he reads Bible for instruction. When he speaks he searches his memory for the correct word. It is he who gathers the good for himself and Estragon. He takes waiting more philosophically than his partner. As he lives according to his rationalist principles, he seems to be reasonable. He assures Estragon that they are in the right place.

### **His other traits:**

Vladimir is very compassionate . When Pozzo plans to sell Lucky in the fair he scolds him for throwing away his old faithful servant. He protects Estragon when there is danger. Estragon is fearful by nature. on the



other hand Vladimir is bold and defends his friend amidst danger. He has a wider view of their situation and has a literal sense of time. He is also patient by nature, a realist and mystic.

### **His helplessness:**

Though Vladimir is mentally more alert than Estragon he finds himself quite helpless when they are compelled to wait endlessly for Godot. Both the tramps become so helpless that they try to hang themselves.

### **Conclusion:**

Estragon cannot do without Vladimir's protection and Vladimir cannot do without Estragon either being complimentary natures they are so dependent on each other that they have to stay together.

## **Estragon**

### **Description:**

Estragon is smaller than Vladimir in structure. He is also an anti hero like Vladimir. Estragon is impatient, impulsive and weak too.

### **Nature:**

He is of timid and fearful nature. Even little sound makes him run and hide himself. As he was once a poet he has some poetic absurdity about his manures .Estragon being a coward threw himself into a river and was saved by Vladimir. Estragon cannot do his without his friend. He lacks sleep and he is disturbed by nightmare.

### **Other traits:**

Estragon's preoccupation is physical. He is irritable. He often forgets. Vladimir has to patiently remind him of their goal of waiting for Godot. He is selfish, obstinate and has a fit of bad temper. He has



spontaneous imagination and he is attracted by the colorful maps of the Holy Land in the Bible. He forgets even the thing that happened in the previous day.

**Sceptic Nature:**

Estragon is impatient and temperamental. He has a sceptic bend of mind. He doubts about the coming of Godot. He repeatedly insists on going away. He expresses his feeling violently in a strong language.

**Conclusion:**

The two tramps Estragon and Vladimir are distinct individuals, having different characters, attitude and temperaments. They represent the ordeal of waiting which is experienced by almost all human beings at one time or the other. These two tramps represent ignorance, helplessness, impotence and boredom. Estragon and Vladimir have been compared to the famous comedians, Laurel and Hardy. Together they give rise to a lot of mirth and fun by their gestures, actions, movements and silly conversations.

