

You call that art? – S5: Absurdism.

Waiting for Godot, a play by Samuel Beckett, 1954

Waiting for Godot begins with two men on a barren road by a leafless tree. These men, Vladimir and Estragon, are often characterized as "tramps," and we soon see that the world of this play is operating with its own set of rules—where nothing happens, nothing is certain, and there's never anything to do. Sound boring? Surprise: it's anything but.

Vladimir and Estragon—who are also called Didi and Gogo, respectively—are waiting for Godot, a man (or perhaps God). The tramps can't be sure if they've met Godot, if they're waiting in the right place, if this is the right day, or even whether Godot is going to show up at all. While they wait, Vladimir and Estragon fill their time with a series of mundane activities (like taking a boot on and off) and trivial conversations (turnips, carrots) interspersed with more serious reflection (dead voices, suicide, the Bible). The tramps are soon interrupted by the arrival of Lucky, a man/servant/pet with a rope tied around his neck, and Pozzo, his master, holding the other end of the long rope. The four men proceed to do together what Vladimir and Estragon did earlier by themselves: namely, nothing. The members of the audience, meanwhile, scratch their heads and look around to see if everyone else gets what's going on. At least, we guess that they do. We sure did the first time around.

Lucky and Pozzo then leave so that Vladimir and Estragon can go back to doing nothing by themselves. Vladimir suggests that this is not the first time he's met with Lucky and Pozzo, which is surprising, since they acted like strangers upon arrival. Then again, Estragon can't even remember a conversation ten lines after it happens, so we're not going to depend on memory in this play.

The nothingness is interrupted by the arrival of the Boy, who reports to Vladimir that Godot isn't coming today, but will be there tomorrow. Yippee! Except not, since Vladimir's comments suggest that the Boy has said this before.

Estragon and Vladimir talk about suicide some more and then resolve to leave the stage, since it's nightfall and they no longer have to wait for Godot. Of course, having resolved to leave, neither man moves, and the curtain closes on Act I. The curtain opens for Act II, which you will soon see is remarkably like Act I. The men still sit around waiting for Godot and try to fill the idle hours in the meantime. Lucky and Pozzo show up, only this time Lucky has gone mute and Pozzo is blind. Pozzo declares that, having lost his eyes, he now has no sense of time. Lucky declares nothing, because he's mute. Vladimir gets rather poetic in the meantime, wondering if maybe he's sleeping, agreeing with Pozzo's claim that life is fleeting. Pozzo and Lucky leave again, just in time for the Boy to show up and tell Vladimir that Godot isn't coming today, but will be there tomorrow.

Vladimir and Estragon have no rope. The men resolve to leave, since it's nightfall and they no longer have to wait for Godot, but neither man moves and the curtain falls. The play ends, but we think everyone knows what happens next. And after that. And after that. Et cetera.

