

# Waiting for Godot Worksheet 1

## Comedy and Tragedy



1

2



### Assignments 1:

1. Regardless of who and what they were before, Vladimir and Estragon, or Didi and Gogo as they call each other, are portrayed as tramps in the play. Look at the pictures above. Which picture fits your idea of a tramp best, and why? Which tramp is comic, and which is tragic?
2. Which picture fits best with the descriptions given of Gogo and Didi?
3. Who is the tramp in picture 2? What message for the audience could Beckett have given here?
4. Go through the play and identify at least one other scene which could be labelled 'slapstick', which is the rough and tumble kind of humour found in old movies of the 1920s and 1930s.

*VLADIMIR Charming evening we're having.*

*ESTRAGON Unforgettable.*

*VLADIMIR And it's not over.*

*ESTRAGON Apparently not.*

*VLADIMIR It's only beginning.*

*ESTRAGON It's awful. (pp. 34-35)*

It is (almost as if) Beckett addressing his audience here, aware of the bleakness and sparseness confronting them in his play so far. Reflect on this and answer these questions: **Assignments 2**

1. Locate at least one other scene in which Beckett possibly has his characters confront the theatre-goers with their set ideas of what theatre is or ought to be.

2. Prison audiences were reported to be much more enthusiastic about the play when it was first performed. Could you, considering the comedy-tragedy element, give a reason or reasons for why that might be?

*Let's hang ourselves immediately!*

VLADIMIR:

*From a bough? (They go towards the tree.) I wouldn't trust it.*

ESTRAGON:

*We can always try.*

VLADIMIR:

*Go ahead.*

ESTRAGON:

*After you.*

VLADIMIR:

*No no, you first.*

ESTRAGON:

*Why me?*

VLADIMIR:

*You're lighter than I am.*

ESTRAGON:

*Just so!*

VLADIMIR:

*I don't understand.*

ESTRAGON:

*Use your intelligence, can't you?*

*Vladimir uses his intelligence.*

VLADIMIR:

*(finally). I remain in the dark.*

ESTRAGON:

*This is how it is. (He reflects.) The bough . . . the bough . . . (Angrily.) Use your head, can't you?*

VLADIMIR:

*You're my only hope.*

ESTRAGON:

*(with effort). Gogo light—bough not break—Gogo dead. Didi heavy—bough break—Didi alone. Whereas—*

VLADIMIR:

*I hadn't thought of that.*

ESTRAGON:

*If it hangs you it'll hang anything.*

ESTRAGON:

*Don't let's do anything. It's safer.*

### **Assignments 3:**

1. Discuss whether you regard this scene comic in any way or not
2. This is not the only scene in the play in which suicide or an attempt at it is mentioned. Find two other references to suicide and discuss whether these can be seen as tragic or comic (or both).

# Waiting for Godot Worksheet 2

## The Crucifixion Theme

Beckett has always stated that if he wanted Godot to be God, he would have called him God, not Godot. Yet, there are quite a few direct and indirect references to the Christian religion and the Bible in the play. For instance this exchange between Gogo and Didi:

Estragon: what?

Vladimir: Suppose we repented.

Estragon: repented what?

Vladimir: Oh...We wouldn't have to go into the details.

Estragon: Our being born? (Beckett, 2006, p. 240)

Early on in the play the two talk about the Crucifixion and the two thieves on the cross. Look up the scene and read it carefully. Then do the assignments below.



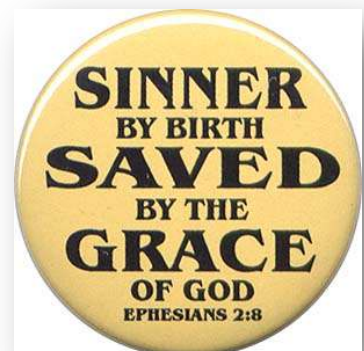
### First set of assignments:

1. How is the idea of repentance tied in with the story of the two thieves on the crosses next to Jesus?
2. In the Bible, Jesus is jeered at by people watching him die. They sneer that if he really is the Son of God, he ought to be able to get himself out of his awful situation. Compare Jesus' predicament to that of Gogo and Didi. Why can't Jesus find a way out? And why can't Gogo and Didi?
3. At the end of his suffering, Jesus asks his Father why he has abandoned him? Do Gogo and Didi also feel abandoned? By who or what?

*Was there another way that Jesus could have saved mankind? Why did it have to be the way of suffering and death? The religious scholar St. Augustine reasoned that there were two issues to be considered:*

*1. If the crucifixion of Jesus was the only means God could find to rescue man from sin and eternal death then he would have to be limited in His power and His wisdom.*

*2. But, if God preferred the cruel death of His Son over some other plan of salvation then God cannot be kind and merciful and good.*



## Second set of assignments

1. Can St. Augustine's considerations be applied to Godot, too? Explain.
2. Jesus suffered greatly physically. Compare that to the suffering of Gogo and Didi.
3. St. Augustine finally argues that the suffering of Christ is part of a Covenant or pact between God and mankind. Do Gogo and Didi feel they have a Covenant of some kind with Godot? And can you think of reasons why, then, Godot does not show up?



*VLADIMIR:*

*Show me.*

*ESTRAGON:*

*There's nothing to show.*

*VLADIMIR:*

*Try and put it on again.*

*ESTRAGON:*

*(examining his foot). I'll air it for a bit.*

*VLADIMIR:*

*There's man all over for you, blaming on his boots the faults of his feet. (He takes off his hat again, peers inside it, feels about inside it, knocks on the crown, blows into it, puts it on again.) This is getting alarming. (Silence. Vladimir deep in thought, Estragon pulling at his toes.)*

*One of the thieves was saved. (Pause.) It's a reasonable percentage. (Pause.)*

## Third set of assignments

1. What is it Didi considers a reasonable percentage? What does that show us about his thoughts on the Crucifixion story?
2. Look up why one of the thieves was saved, and consider how this may be relevant to Didi's interest in the Crucifixion story.
3. St Augustine again: 'Do not despair: one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume, one of the thieves was damned' What does he mean? Does it make sense in the case of Gogo and Didi's predicament?

# Waiting for Godot Worksheet 3

## Lucky's Speech

VLADIMIR:

*You want to get rid of him?*

POZZO:

*I do. But instead of driving him away as I might have done, I mean instead of simply kicking him out on his arse, in the goodness of my heart I am bringing him to the fair, where I hope to get a good price for him. The truth is you can't drive such creatures away. The best thing would be to kill them.*

*Lucky weeps.*

ESTRAGON:

*He's crying!*

POZZO:

*Old dogs have more dignity.*



### Assignments:

1. Look up the part of the play from which this fragment was taken and read on until you find **why** Pozzo wants to get rid of Lucky.
2. What do you make of Pozzo's attitude, as portrayed in the fragment above? Consider this, and the fact that Lucky is a slave, in the light of the early 1950s, when this play was first performed.
3. Go to the part where Lucky speaks. It should be easy to find, as it is the longest speech in the play. Below the beginning of this speech is given:

LUCKY:

*1. Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Puncher and Wattmann of a personal God quaquaquaqua with white beard quaquaquaqua outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown but time will tell and suffers like 5. the divine Miranda with those who for reasons unknown but time will tell are plunged in torment plunged in fire whose fire flames if that continues and who can doubt it will fire the firmament that is to say blast hell to heaven so blue still and calm so calm with a calm which even though intermittent is better than nothing but not so fast and considering what is more that as a result of the labors left unfinished crowned by the Acacacademy of Anthropopometry of Essy-in-Possy of Testew and Cunard it is established beyond all doubt all other doubt than that which clings to the labors of men that as a result of the labors unfinished of Testew and Cunard ...*

## Assignments

1. What kind of speech begins with words such as 'Given the existence'?
2. What are 'public works'? What phrase should Lucky have used here?
3. Quaqua in Latin means 'wherever'. What do you make of Lucky's 'quaquaquaqua'? Look at the other words in the line in which it appears. How could it also be onomatopoeic?
4. Look at line 3. Fill in the grid below

Word	Meaning	Context in the play
apathia		
athambia		
aphasia		

5. Can you think of reasons why people go silent? Which of those reasons do you think applies to Lucky?
6. Who else is 'silent' in this play? Link that back to line 3. Do you think there is sense among the nonsense of Lucky's speech?
7. Read the remainder of Lucky's speech and fill in the grid below:

Names	Question you could ask	Reference (in text or on its own)
Puncher and Wattman	Where could we, in the 1950s, find both a puncher and a wattman?	Feckham, Peckham, Fulham, Clapham
	Which names are rude or scatological?	
	Who is or was Bishop Berkeley?	
Miranda		
		Respectively testicles and idiot in French
Steinweg and Peterman		

8. Go through the first 20 or so lines of Lucky's speech and highlight the bits that, joined together, could belong to a serious scholarly debate (see assignment 1).