

Waiting for Godot Summary

Vladimir and **Estragon** wait at the side of a road, near a tree, agreeing that there is "nothing to be done." Estragon struggles to take off one of his boots. Vladimir asks if Estragon has ever read the Bible. Estragon says all he remembers are some colored maps of the holy land. Vladimir tells Estragon about the two thieves crucified along with Jesus. One of the gospels says that one of the thieves was saved, but Vladimir wonders if this is true. Estragon wants to leave, but Vladimir reminds him that they have to wait here for **Godot**. Estragon and Vladimir debate whether they are in the right place and whether it is the right day for Godot to come. Estragon falls asleep and Vladimir immediately wakes him, saying he was lonely without him. Estragon starts to describe his dream, but Vladimir angrily stops him and tells him to keep his nightmares to himself.

Vladimir wonders what he and Estragon should do, and Estragon says they should continue to wait. While waiting, Estragon suggests they hang themselves on the tree. The two disagree over who should hang himself first, though, and Vladimir concludes that they should just wait for Godot. Estragon asks what Vladimir asked Godot for and Vladimir says that he made a vague sort of prayer. Estragon is hungry, and Vladimir offers him a carrot. All he can find in his pockets, though, are turnips. Finally, he finds a carrot and gives it to Estragon. Estragon asks if they are "tied" to Godot and Vladimir says that they are. The two are interrupted by a loud scream off-stage.

Pozzo and **Lucky** enter. Pozzo drives Lucky forward with a whip like a pack animal, with a rope tied around his neck. Lucky is forced to carry Pozzo's things. Estragon asks if this is Godot, but then Pozzo introduces himself. He jerks the rope that is around Lucky's neck and calls him "pig." Lucky brings him his stool and some food. Pozzo eats some chicken and Estragon begs him for the leftover bones. Pozzo gives him the bones. Vladimir is outraged at Pozzo's horrible treatment of Lucky and wants

to leave. Pozzo tells him to stay, though, in case Godot should show up. Estragon asks why Lucky doesn't put down his bags. Pozzo says that Lucky has the right to put them down and be comfortable, so he must be carrying them because he wants to. He says that Lucky is trying to impress Pozzo so he won't get rid of him, because Pozzo has plenty of slaves. Pozzo says he plans to sell Lucky at a fair. Lucky begins to cry and Pozzo gives Estragon a handkerchief to bring to him. Estragon approaches Lucky and Lucky kicks him violently in the shin.

Pozzo then begins to cry, saying that he "can't bear it." Vladimir scolds Lucky for making his master cry. Pozzo collects himself and looks for his pipe, which he has misplaced. He makes a speech about night and twilight, then asks if there's anything he can do for Estragon and Vladimir, since they have been nice to him. He offers to make Lucky dance, recite, sing, or think for their entertainment. Lucky dances and his hat falls off. Pozzo says that Lucky needs his **hat** to think, so Vladimir places it back on Lucky's head and Lucky launches into a long, rambling monologue. Pozzo prepares to leave and says goodbye to Vladimir and Estragon, but doesn't move.

Pozzo and Lucky eventually leave, and Estragon wants to leave as well, but Vladimir tells him they need to stay and wait for Godot. A **boy** comes onstage, bearing a message from Godot. He says Godot will not come today, but will come the next day. He tells Vladimir that he works for Godot, minding his goats, and says that Godot is a good master. The boy leaves and Estragon and Vladimir are ready to leave for the night. They say they are going to leave, but stay still. The first act ends.

The second act begins the next day, in the same location and at the same time. Vladimir enters and sings. Estragon enters and tells Vladimir that he was beaten the previous night for no reason. Vladimir and Estragon embrace, happy to see each other again, and Estragon asks what they should do. Vladimir tells him they should wait for Godot. Vladimir mentions Pozzo and Lucky, and Estragon doesn't remember who these people are. He also doesn't recognize the place where they are waiting from the day before. Vladimir says that he and Estragon picked grapes for the same

man a long time ago in "the Macon country," but Estragon doesn't remember this, either.

After a long silence, Vladimir asks Estragon to talk about anything to fill the silence, but the two struggle to find something to talk about. Vladimir asks if Estragon really doesn't remember Lucky and Pozzo. Estragon remembers someone kicking him and remembers the chicken bones he got from Pozzo. Vladimir offers Estragon a radish or turnip, because he has no carrots. Estragon falls asleep but then wakes up startled. He begins to tell Vladimir about his dream but Vladimir interrupts him and tells him not to describe the dream. Estragon wants to leave, but Vladimir reminds him that they have to stay and wait for Godot. Vladimir notices Lucky's **hat** lying on the ground and tries it on. He and Estragon trade their hats and Lucky's **hat** back and forth, trying different ones on. Vladimir wants to "play at Pozzo and Lucky," and he and Estragon pretend to be the two characters.

Estragon leaves the stage for a moment and then returns and says that "they" are coming. He and Vladimir hold lookouts at either end of the stage. After insulting each other, they make up and embrace. Pozzo and Lucky enter. Pozzo is now blind, following closely behind Lucky. Lucky stops when he sees Vladimir and Estragon, and Pozzo bumps into him. They both fall to the ground and Pozzo cannot get up. Vladimir and Estragon consider trying to get something out of Pozzo for helping him up. Pozzo cries out for help and offers money in return for any assistance. Vladimir decides to help Pozzo up but falls over himself in the process. Estragon tries to help Vladimir up, but falls down in the process. None of the characters are able to get up for a while, but Estragon suddenly suggests that he and Vladimir try to stand up and they are able to get up easily.

Estragon again wants to leave, but Vladimir tells him to keep waiting. He suggests they help Pozzo to get up in the meantime. They stand Pozzo up, and he asks who they are, not remembering either of them from the previous day. Pozzo asks what time it is and Estragon thinks it's morning, while Vladimir is sure that it's evening. Vladimir asks when Pozzo went blind, and Pozzo says that "the blind have no notion

of time." He asks Estragon to check on Lucky. Estragon goes over to Lucky and kicks him repeatedly. Pozzo shouts, "Up pig!" and yanks on Lucky's rope. The two leave the stage, as Estragon falls asleep. Vladimir wakes Estragon, saying he was lonely.

Just like the day before, a boy enters with a message from Godot, that he will not come this day but will certainly come the next. Vladimir asks the boy what Godot does and the boy says Godot does nothing. Vladimir asks the boy to tell Godot that he saw Vladimir. The boy leaves. Estragon wants to go far away, but Vladimir says they can't go far, as they have to come back here tomorrow and wait for Godot. Estragon suggests they hang themselves on the tree using his belt, but when they test the belt's strength by pulling on either end, it breaks. Vladimir and Estragon prepare to leave for the night. They say they are going to leave, but neither moves.

Waiting for Godot: Act 1 Summary & Analysis

Summary

Analysis

Sitting on the side of a country road by a tree, **Estragon** tries repeatedly to pull off one of his boots. **Vladimir** enters and Estragon exasperatedly tells him there's "nothing to be done." Vladimir agrees and asks Estragon where he spent the last night. Estragon says he slept in a ditch.

The general statement, "nothing to be done," can refer to Estragon's inability to pull off his boot, waiting for Godot, or the characters' lives in general—even the human condition itself.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Vladimir asks if "they" beat **Estragon** while he was sleeping there and he says that they did. Vladimir says, "It's too much for one man," but then reasons that there's no

point in giving up now. Estragon tells Vladimir to stop talking and help him get his boot off. Vladimir asks if the boot hurts, and Estragon balks at the question. Vladimir reminds him that he's not the only one who suffers, and points out to Estragon that his fly is unbuttoned.

The beginning of the play introduces the audience to the characters' bleak world, which is filled with all kinds of suffering, from the more trivial (a boot that is stuck on) to the more serious (an anonymous "they" who beat Estragon mercilessly). Beckett mixes this suffering with abrupt humor, here in the form of Estragon's unbuttoned fly.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Estragon again asks for help, but **Vladimir** ignores him, taking off his hat, looking in it, and shaking it upside down, as if hoping for something to fall out. Nothing does, and he says, "nothing to be done." Estragon finally gets his boot off and then looks inside it and shakes it upside down, apparently also hoping to find something inside it. Vladimir says, "show me," but Estragon tells him there's nothing to see.

The characters' absurd behavior (looking inside their hats and boots) is never explained. Vladimir ignores Estragon's pain, and repeats Estragon's assertion that there is nothing to be done: they are not only bored, but crippled by their inability to do anything at all.

ACTIVE THEMES



Vladimir wonders what would happen if he and **Estragon** repented. Estragon asks what they would be repenting for and Vladimir doesn't say. Estragon suggests

repenting being born, which makes Vladimir laugh. Estragon tells him not to laugh, and instead only to smile.

The Christian idea of repentance no longer has any real value for Vladimir and Estragon. Estragon's comment underscores the uneasy quality of the play's humor. Should the audience heed his warning too, or is it okay for us to laugh?

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Vladimir asks if **Estragon** has ever read the Bible and if he remembers the Gospels. Estragon remembers only colored maps of the holy land. As Estragon describes the colorful maps, Vladimir jokes that he should have been a poet. Estragon says he was one. Vladimir asks how Estragon's foot is doing. It's swollen.

In somewhat typical Postmodern fashion, Estragon's stance toward Biblical tradition is devoid of any reverence or specialness. It is unclear whether Estragon's absurdly abrupt statement that he was a poet is to be taken seriously or not.

ACTIVE THEMES



Vladimir tells **Estragon** about the two thieves crucified alongside Jesus in the Bible. One of the two thieves was damned to hell, while the other was saved. "Saved from what?" asks Estragon. Vladimir says from hell. Vladimir wonders why only one of the four Evangelists writes of the one thief being saved. Estragon is bored by the conversation.

The Biblical story introduces the idea of salvation into the play. But in the Modern-Postmodern world of the play there is no God by whom the characters hope to be saved—only Godot. Estragon, meanwhile, is bored even by his friend's conversation.

ACTIVE THEMES



Vladimir continues to wonder about the two thieves, and whether one was saved or not. **Estragon** doesn't follow Vladimir's thinking and is confused. Vladimir asks why they should believe the one Evangelist who says a thief was saved, when the other three disagree. Estragon asks who believes that one of the thieves was saved and Vladimir says that everybody does. Estragon says people are "bloody ignorant apes."

Vladimir is skeptical of the Bible and points out its self-contradictions. Estragon's comment shows the bleak status of humanity in the play. While he nonchalantly compares humans to apes, Vladimir will be greatly pained throughout the play by his lack of dignity.

ACTIVE THEMES



While **Estragon** gets up and looks around, **Vladimir** looks in Estragon's boot but doesn't find anything. Estragon suggests they go somewhere, but Vladimir tells him they can't, because they are waiting for someone named **Godot**. Estragon asks if Vladimir is sure that they are in the right place, and Vladimir says that it must be, because of the tree at the side of the road.

Estragon will ask this question repeatedly over the course of the play, due to his absurd lack of memory. The promise of some kind of help from Godot is actually an insidious form of control and entrapment, as it forces Vladimir and Estragon to stay put, waiting indefinitely.

ACTIVE THEMES





Estragon asks where the tree's leaves are and **Vladimir** says it must be dead, or else it's not the right season for leaves. The two agree that the tree is more like a bush or shrub. Vladimir doubts whether **Godot** will really come. Estragon asks what they will do if he doesn't come, and Vladimir says they'll come back to the same place the next day, and the next day, and so on, until Godot arrives.

Vladimir and Estragon absurdly deny that the tree on-stage is really a tree. Vladimir's plan to wait for Godot indefinitely shows how he and Estragon are trapped here in a kind of prison of their own making: they are free to leave but kept here by their hope for Godot's arrival.

ACTIVE THEMES



Estragon says they came to this place yesterday, but **Vladimir** disagrees. Estragon asks if Vladimir is sure that they are at this spot on the right day. Vladimir thinks so (it is Saturday), but looks through his pockets to see if he wrote down somewhere on which day they were supposed to come. Estragon doubts what day it is and worries that maybe **Godot** came yesterday and they weren't there to meet him.

Unlike Vladimir, who has a somewhat stable sense of time, Estragon is completely temporally disoriented, and has no idea what day it is, let alone a sense of what he and Vladimir did yesterday.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

The two take a break from talking and **Estragon** falls asleep. **Vladimir** wakes him and Estragon asks why he won't let him sleep. Vladimir says he was lonely. Estragon

says he had a dream and begins to tell Vladimir about it, but Vladimir angrily shouts at him not to describe the dream. He tells Estragon to keep his nightmares private. Vladimir has an intense fear of loneliness. He feels painfully alone even when Estragon simply stops talking to him and falls asleep.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Estragon wonders if it would be better for he and **Vladimir** to go their separate ways. He is reminded of a joke about an Englishman at a brothel that he tells to Vladimir, who stops him in the middle of the joke and leaves the stage. Vladimir returns and Estragon asks if he has something to tell him. Vladimir says he has nothing to say.

Estragon's unfinished joke and Vladimir's having nothing to say to Estragon lend an absurd tone to the scene. Vladimir says he has nothing to say, but just saying this proves that he did, in fact, have something to say.

ACTIVE THEMES



Estragon apologizes and the two embrace. Estragon jumps back, though, because **Vladimir** reeks of garlic. Vladimir asks what they should do now. Estragon suggests they wait. Vladimir asks what they will do while they wait and Estragon suggests they hang themselves. They go over to the tree, but neither wants to be hanged first.

Estragon's jumping back from the garlic smell of Vladimir undercuts their tender embrace with abrupt humor. Estragon's nonchalant suggestion of suicide is uneasily absurd and uncomfortable for the audience, as it is both comical and deeply troubling.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Estragon says **Vladimir** should hang himself first because he is heavier. If Estragon hanged himself first, and then Vladimir tried but the branch broke under his weight,

Vladimir would be all alone. Vladimir asks if he is really heavier than Estragon and then asks, "Well? What do we do?" Estragon says it's safer to do nothing at all. Vladimir suggests they wait and see what **Godot** says.

The characters' calm consideration of the details of how they might hang themselves continues the eerily absurd quality of the play. In the end, though, they decide simply to keep on waiting, doing nothing at all.

ACTIVE THEMES



Vladimir says he is interested to hear what **Godot** will offer them. **Estragon** asks what they asked Godot for and Vladimir says nothing very specific; it was just a vague sort of prayer. Estragon asks what Godot's reply to the prayer was and Vladimir reminds him that Godot said he would wait and see. Estragon remembers and adds that Godot said he couldn't promise anything.

The promise of some kind of salvation through Godot is anything but certain. Not only are Vladimir and Estragon not sure that Godot will come, but they don't even know if he would really help them if he did. Nonetheless, they keep waiting for him.

ACTIVE THEMES



Estragon asks, "Where do we come in?" and **Vladimir** is confused at first, then responds, "on our hands and knees." Estragon asks if they don't have rights any longer and Vladimir tells him they got rid of them. Suddenly, Vladimir tells Estragon to listen, as if he hears something. The two listen, but neither actually hears anything. They sigh in relief.

Vladimir's comment that they would approach Godot on their hands and knees might suggest a parallel between Godot and God. However, this subservient posture might also suggest that Godot is not some kind of savior, but merely a new, oppressive master.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Vladimir says he thought he had heard **Godot**. **Estragon** says he's hungry and Vladimir offers him a carrot, but then all he can find in his pockets are turnips. At last, he finds a carrot and gives it to Estragon, who excitedly eats it.

Estragon is desperate for food. Vladimir's confusion over whether he has a carrot or not adds some humorous levity to the characters' suffering.

ACTIVE THEMES



Estragon asks **Vladimir** if they are "tied." Vladimir asks what he means and Estragon asks if they are tied to **Godot**. Vladimir says they are, at least for the moment. Estragon asks if they are sure that this person is named Godot, and Vladimir says he thinks so. Estragon finishes his carrot and says again, "nothing to be done."

Waiting for Godot has become such an obligation that Vladimir and Estragon are "tied" to him, trapped though apparently free to leave. Estragon repeats his earlier assertion of boredom and nihilism: there is nothing for them to do, and perhaps there is really nothing ever to be done.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

The two are interrupted by a horrible scream off-stage. They run to the edge of the stage. **Estragon** stops and runs back to get his boot, then runs back to **Vladimir**.

They huddle together, frightened by the noise.

In the face of their fear and suffering, Vladimir and Estragon huddle together. They are each other's only companions.

ACTIVE THEMES



Pozzo and **Lucky** enter. Pozzo drives Lucky like an animal with a rope around his neck. He carries a whip to drive him along, while Lucky carries a folding stool, a bag, a picnic basket, and a coat. Pozzo whips Lucky as they pass across the stage and just as they are leaving the stage, he stops Lucky suddenly, causing him to drop all his things. **Vladimir** goes to help Lucky, but **Estragon** stops him. Pozzo tells the two of them to be careful, as Lucky is dangerous.

Pozzo's horrible treatment of Lucky and Lucky's physical suffering are, at the same time, tragic and (with Lucky's slapstick clumsiness) somewhat comical. The audience or reader is unsure whether to laugh or cringe.

ACTIVE THEMES



Estragon asks **Vladimir** if this is **Godot**, but then **Pozzo** introduces himself by name and asks if they are not familiar with him. Estragon mishears him and ponders out loud if he knows a Bozzo. Pozzo angrily corrects him. Estragon apologizes, saying they are not from here, but Pozzo says, "you are human beings none the less," and ironically says they are all made in God's image.

Pozzo's ironic reference to the Bible emphasizes the undignified position of suffering humans in this environment. The mix-ups with Pozzo's identity and name further the sense of unstable identities in the play.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Pozzo asks who **Godot** is. **Vladimir** says he's an acquaintance, but **Estragon** says they hardly know him. Pozzo asks if they were waiting for Godot here, on his land, but then he admits that the road is free land. He changes the conversation and jerks the rope that is tied around **Lucky's** neck, calling him "pig." He continues to pull Lucky around by the rope around his neck, then asks Lucky for his coat.

Pozzo's treatment of Lucky, whom he simply calls "pig," is the most blunt and obvious form of dehumanizing suffering that Beckett displays on-stage. And Estragon and Vladimir, for now at least, seem not at all interested in trying to help Lucky.

ACTIVE THEMES

Pozzo asks **Lucky** for his stool, which Lucky places on the ground for Pozzo to sit on. He orders Lucky around some more, ordering him to bring his basket, from which he takes out a piece of chicken and a bottle of wine. He eats and drinks, as **Vladimir** and **Estragon** inspect Lucky, who is exhaustedly falling asleep as he stands.

Pozzo continues to maltreat Lucky as his slave. Vladimir and Estragon inspect Lucky, but more out of curiosity than empathy or pity for his suffering.

ACTIVE THEMES

Vladimir and **Estragon** continue to examine **Lucky**, noticing how the rope chafes his neck and how tired he looks. They examine Lucky's appearance, with eyes "goggling out of his head." Vladimir suggests they ask Lucky a question and Estragon begins to speak to him, when **Pozzo** stops them, telling them to leave Lucky alone. He calls for his basket again and when Lucky doesn't move, Pozzo yanks the rope again. Lucky takes the bottle of wine and puts it back in the basket. Again, Vladimir and Estragon observe Lucky's suffering, but don't seem to sympathize with his pain. Their indifference to his suffering allows Pozzo to continue to treat him so horribly.

ACTIVE THEMES

Estragon looks at the chicken bones that **Pozzo** has thrown on the ground and tentatively asks if he can have them. Pozzo says he doesn't need the bones, but that they should go to **Lucky**, so Estragon should ask Lucky if he can have them.

Estragon asks and Lucky doesn't reply. Pozzo yells at Lucky to answer, but when he says nothing Pozzo tells Estragon the bones are his.

Estragon stoops so low as to beg for the leftover bones of Pozzo's meal, displaying both how his suffering has robbed him of his dignity and how insensitive Pozzo is to the suffering of others. He could have offered some actual food to the nearly starving Estragon, after all.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Vladimir suddenly shouts out, "It's a scandal!" **Pozzo** asks what he is talking about, and Vladimir says that it is a scandal to treat **Lucky** in such a way. Pozzo asks how old Vladimir is (he does not respond) and then says he must be leaving. He thanks Vladimir and **Estragon** for their company. But then he debates smoking some more from his pipe before he leaves.

Vladimir finally protests against Pozzo's treatment of Lucky, but doesn't actually do anything about it. The ease with which Pozzo moves on in the conversation after Vladimir's accusatory outburst is uncomfortably absurd.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Vladimir tells **Estragon** they should leave, but **Pozzo** stops them. He yanks **Lucky's** rope again and has him move the stool. He sits back down and refills his pipe. Vladimir wants to leave, but Pozzo tells him, "wait a little longer, you'll never regret it," and Estragon admits they are "in no hurry."

Estragon's humorous comment that he and Vladimir are "in no hurry," encapsulates their predicament. They will keep waiting "a little longer," for quite a long time.

ACTIVE THEMES



Vladimir still wants to go, and **Pozzo** tells him to think carefully, asking what would happen if Vladimir missed his "appointment" with **Godot**. Pozzo says he would like to meet Godot as well, since, as he says, "the more people I meet the happier I become." **Estragon** asks Pozzo why **Lucky** doesn't put down his bags and Vladimir encourages Estragon to ask Lucky himself. Lucky doesn't reply, but Pozzo says he will tell them.

Pozzo is perhaps also lonely, eager to encounter new people. Vladimir wants to leave, but feels obligated to stay and wait for Godot (though no one is forcing him to).

ACTIVE THEMES



Pozzo prepares to speak and makes sure everyone is listening (jerk the rope around **Lucky's** neck to make him pay attention). He pauses to think and then asks what the question was. **Estragon** and **Vladimir** remind him. Pozzo says that Lucky has the right to "make himself comfortable," so the only reason why he doesn't must be that he doesn't want to. He says Lucky doesn't want to, because he wants to impress Pozzo, so that Pozzo will "keep him."

Pozzo makes everyone pay attention but then comically forgets what he was going to say. Pozzo's explanation for why Lucky endures such horrible treatment is absurd, yet it is reminiscent of arguments made by other slaveholders. For instance, Southern slave owners often argued that their slaves were better off for being slaves, or pointed to slave songs as indications of their slaves being happy as slaves.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Vladimir and **Estragon** are confused, wondering why **Pozzo** would get rid of **Lucky**. Pozzo repeats that Lucky wants to show how well he carries things so that Pozzo will keep him. But, Pozzo says, Lucky actually carries things "like a pig." He says that he has plenty of slaves and cries out, "Atlas, son of Jupiter!"

Pozzo inverts the entire logic of slavery, asserting that Lucky acts like a slave because he wants to be Pozzo's slave, which seems ludicrous. Atlas is not the son of Jupiter, suggesting that the knowledge and authority Pozzo projects are based on false premises.

ACTIVE THEMES



Vladimir again asks if **Pozzo** wants to get rid of **Lucky**. Pozzo says he is on his way to the fair to sell Lucky, but that it would be better just to kill him. Lucky begins to weep, and Pozzo says, "old dogs have more dignity." Pozzo gives his handkerchief to **Estragon** and tells him to wipe away Lucky's tears. Estragon hesitates, so Vladimir says he'll do it. The two fight over the handkerchief.

Pozzo cruelly comments on Lucky's lack of dignity, caused by his suffering at Pozzo's own hands. Vladimir and Estragon absurdly fight over the right to wipe away Lucky's tears—it is never explained why either of them should care who does this.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Estragon walks up to **Lucky** with the handkerchief, but Lucky kicks him in the shins. **Pozzo** shouts for the handkerchief, which Lucky picks up and returns to him. Meanwhile, Estragon's leg is bleeding, and he cries out that he can hardly walk. **Vladimir** says he'll carry Estragon, "if necessary." Pozzo notes that Lucky has stopped crying and jokes that Estragon has replaced Lucky. "The tears of the world are a constant quantity," he says.

Should we see Lucky's kicking Estragon as some light slapstick comedy or as a continuation of the haunting world of suffering that pervades the play? As is typical of Beckett's dark humor, the answer is a mix of both. Pozzo sees the suffering of the world as a constant, unavoidable fact (though this may also just justify his own role in inflicting abuse on others that might create tears).

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Pozzo says that "our generation" is no unhappier than any previous one and says that **Lucky** taught him that. He says that he took Lucky as a slave 60 years ago and **Vladimir** is astonished that he would turn away "such an old and faithful servant." Vladimir says that Pozzo is throwing Lucky away "like a banana skin."

Pozzo characterizes the unspecified time of the play as no unhappier than any other time. This can be taken optimistically (the present time is just as happy as any other) or more pessimistically (all other times have been as bleak as this one). Vladimir is again upset by Lucky's suffering.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Pozzo mumbles that he "can't bear it" with **Lucky** and that he is going crazy. **Vladimir** and **Estragon** repeat his words, and then Vladimir turns to Lucky accusingly, telling him his behavior is "abominable" toward "such a good master." Pozzo begins to cry, saying that Lucky "used to be so kind...so helpful...and entertaining." Vladimir and Estragon wonder whether Lucky wants a new slave to take his place or not.

Pozzo imposes suffering on Lucky but presents himself as the victim of his own slave's change in behavior. Vladimir abruptly shifts from scolding Pozzo to chastising Lucky, suggesting that Vladimir dislikes abuse but doesn't actually have the ability to separate real abuse from false. This is not to say that Pozzo is faking his sadness, but rather that his sadness is, on some fundamental level, illegitimate.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Pozzo collects himself and says there wasn't "a word of truth" in what he just said.

"Do I look like a man that can be made to suffer?" he

asks. **Vladimir** and **Estragon** comment on how "charming" and "unforgettable" their evening has been. Pozzo tries to find his pipe, which he has misplaced, while Vladimir leaves the stage momentarily.

Pozzo shifts emotions with comic abruptness. His rhetorical question is meant to imply that he cannot be made to suffer, but clearly (as we have just seen) he can.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Pozzo is distraught at having lost his pipe and begins to ask **Vladimir** if he has seen it, before he notices that Vladimir has left without saying goodbye. **Estragon** tells Pozzo to get up and look at something. He points off in the distance and says, "it's all over." Vladimir returns, angry, and kicks over Pozzo's stool. He calms down and asks, "will night never come?"

Estragon's vague comment of despair ("it's all over,") is all the more bleak for how vague it is: it could apply to anything, from Estragon's hopes for a better life to all of human history. Vladimir is beginning to get angry from waiting all day for Godot.

ACTIVE THEMES



Pozzo says he understands and that he wouldn't want to leave before nightfall either if he were waiting for **Godot**. He says he'd like to sit down on his stool again, but doesn't know how. **Estragon** offers to help and Pozzo tells him to ask him to sit down. Estragon asks Pozzo to sit down and he does.

Pozzo's inability to sit down unless asked to is absurd and humorous, but is also another example of characters constrained by seemingly nothing, but constrained nonetheless.

ACTIVE THEMES



Pozzo says he must be going, because of his schedule, though **Vladimir** says, "time has stopped." **Pozzo** disagrees, then says he will tell Vladimir and Estragon about twilight. He prepares to speak and asks for everyone's attention. He cracks his whip to get **Lucky's** attention then throws down the whip, saying it is worn out. Pozzo forgets what he was going to talk about.

Vladimir's comment that time has stopped characterizes the repetitive, recursive way time functions in the play. Pozzo again calls for everyone's attention and then comically forgets what he wanted to say.

ACTIVE THEMES



Vladimir again suggests he and **Estragon** leave. **Pozzo** asks Estragon what his name is, and Estragon says it is Adam. Pozzo remembers that he wanted to talk about the night. He tells everyone to look up at the sky and describes its shifting

colors lyrically. Then, he describes how night "burst[s] upon us," saying, "that's how it is on this bitch of an earth."

Whether Estragon is playing with Pozzo or actually thinks his name is Adam, his reply to Pozzo suggests the instability of individuals' identities in the play. Adam, of course, is also the name of the Biblical first man in Eden, a condition that is almost the opposite of Estragon's.

ACTIVE THEMES



Vladimir says that he and **Estragon** can simply bide their time and wait. He says they are used to it. **Pozzo** asks them what they thought of his speech: "Good? Middling? Poor? Positively bad?" They compliment his speaking. Estragon and Vladimir describe their boredom, waiting while "nothing happens."

Pozzo's asking for feedback on his speech is somewhat silly and humorous. After the momentary distraction of some conversation, Vladimir and Estragon are again bored, returning again to the conclusion that "nothing happens."

ACTIVE THEMES



Pozzo says that since **Vladimir** and **Estragon** have been civil to him, he wonders if there is anything he can do to help them, since they are "having such a dull, dull time." Estragon asks for money, though Vladimir is offended and says they are not beggars. Pozzo concludes that he has done enough just by talking to Vladimir and Estragon for some time.

Estragon has no shame in asking for money, whereas Vladimir sees this as beneath their dignity. Pozzo's self-satisfied conclusion that he has given them the gift of his speaking is absurd, but to some degree true—he has distracted them from their "dull, dull" waiting.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Pozzo pulls on **Lucky's** rope, picks up the whip, and asks whether **Estragon** and **Vladimir** want Lucky to dance, sing, recite, or think. He says that Lucky can think out loud for hours. Estragon says he'd rather see Lucky dance, but Vladimir wants to hear Lucky think. Estragon suggests they have Lucky dance first, and then think. Pozzo says Lucky only refused to dance once.

Vladimir is apparently no longer troubled by Lucky's suffering, as he is eager to be entertained by his dancing and thinking. The idea of Lucky thinking on command for entertainment is particularly odd and absurd, though Estragon and Vladimir treat it as perfectly ordinary.

ACTIVE THEMES

RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Lucky dances. **Pozzo** says Lucky used to be able to dance better. He asks if **Estragon** and **Vladimir** know what Lucky's dance is called. Estragon guesses "The Scapegoat's Agony," while Vladimir guesses "The Hard Stool." Pozzo says the dance is called "The Net," because Lucky thinks he's entangled in a net.

Estragon's guess at the dance's name points to Lucky's status as a scapegoat, the person on whom Pozzo takes out his own unhappiness. Vladimir's guess is a crude pun. Pozzo's suggests the pervasive sense of entrapment that all the characters feel.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Estragon asks about the time **Lucky** refused to dance. **Pozzo** prepares to speak, then forgets what he was going to say. Estragon and **Vladimir** try to remember, as well. Estragon thinks maybe he was going to say why Lucky doesn't put down his bags. Vladimir says Pozzo already answered that question. In any case, Vladimir notes that Lucky has put his bags down in order to dance.

All three characters are comically unable to remember what they were just talking about. It is this kind of forgetfulness that allows for the play's repetitive sense of time.

ACTIVE THEMES



Estragon laments the fact that "nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes." **Vladimir** asks **Pozzo** to tell **Lucky** to think. Pozzo says Lucky needs his **hat** first, which has fallen off during the dance. Estragon doesn't want to give Lucky his hat and asks Pozzo to order Lucky to fetch it, but Pozzo wants someone to give it to him. Vladimir picks up Lucky's **hat** and offers it to him, but Pozzo says he must place it on Lucky's head.

Estragon and Vladimir periodically return to the blunt fact that nothing happens in their lives. Estragon's comment could easily be spoken by one of Beckett's audience members, watching a play in which nothing happens. Meanwhile, Pozzo and Lucky's absurd antics continue.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Vladimir puts the **hat** on **Lucky's** head, but Lucky does nothing. **Pozzo** jerks the rope around his neck and orders him to think. Lucky begins to speak, but Pozzo stops him and orders him to back up, then turn to face the audience. He orders him to think again. Lucky delivers a long, nonsensical speech marked by repeated syllables ("Acacacademy") and pseudo-academic language.

The idea of Lucky thinking on command is humorous, but the way in which Pozzo orders Lucky around is cruel. The combination of Lucky's suffering and his ridiculous speech create an uncomfortable absurdity.

ACTIVE THEMES



As **Lucky** continues, he begins describing repeatedly mountains, rivers, air, fire, stones, and the sea. He repeats phrases nonsensically, including "in spite of the tennis," and the other three characters begin to find his speech annoying and painful. They throw themselves on top of Lucky to stop him from talking, and **Vladimir** finally takes his **hat** away. Lucky falls silent. **Pozzo** snatches the hat and stomps on it, proclaiming, "There's an end to his thinking!"

Lucky's speech is absurd and mostly unintelligible. It is never explained why Lucky's ability to think out loud is bizarrely dependent on his wearing his hat.

ACTIVE THEMES



Pozzo kicks **Lucky** and calls him a pig again. He asks **Vladimir** and **Estragon** to help pick Lucky up and hold him steady. They let go of him and he falls, so they pick him up again. Pozzo puts his bag and basket back in Lucky's hands, and Lucky regains his balance, so that Vladimir and Estragon can let go of him. Pozzo thanks the two and prepares to leave, but realizes he has misplaced his watch.

Lucky can only stand when he holds Pozzo's things. He is paradoxically dependent upon his own servitude and suffering. Similarly, Vladimir and Estragon rely upon Godot, who, since he never arrives, is also the source of their torturous boredom.

ACTIVE THEMES



Pozzo calls for silence and he, **Estragon**, and **Vladimir** listen to see if they can hear the ticking of the watch. Pozzo asks which of the two smells so bad and Estragon answers that his feet stink, but Vladimir's breath does. Pozzo decides to leave, reasoning that he must have left his watch "at the manor."

The missing watch could symbolize the absence of a normal system of time in the play. One of the ways Beckett creates his absurd humor is by undercutting serious moments with physical humor like the characters' bad smells, which also highlights that just as Vladimir and Estragon are trapped on stage, people are trapped in their bodies.

ACTIVE THEMES



The three characters say "adieu" but no one moves. They say it again and politely bid farewell to each other once more. No one moves. **Pozzo** says that he seems to be unable to leave. **Estragon** says, "such is life." Pozzo backs away from **Lucky**, and then, holding onto the rope, cracks his whip and orders Lucky to move. Lucky begins to move, with Pozzo following after.

The characters comically repeat "adieu" over and over again but are inexplicably unable to move. They seem to be somehow trapped by their own free will. "Adieu," literally means "to God," so there may be some ironic wordplay here: is there even a God in this world for the characters to go to?

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

As **Pozzo** is about to leave the stage, he calls for his stool and **Vladimir** gets it and gives it to him. Pozzo, Vladimir, and **Estragon** say "adieu" again and Pozzo leaves, shouting at **Lucky**. Vladimir says that this encounter with Pozzo and Lucky passed the time, and Estragon asks what they should do now. Vladimir doesn't know, so

Estragon suggests they leave, but Vladimir says they can't, since they are waiting for **Godot**.

While uneventful, the meeting with Pozzo and Lucky at least distracted Vladimir and Estragon from their boredom. Now they are alone and bored again. Unable to leave, the characters are trapped here by their own sense of hope. Ironically, if they were to give up hope of Godot's arrival, they might be free to leave.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Vladimir comments on how much **Pozzo** and **Lucky** had changed. **Estragon** is confused, because they did not know this pair before, but Vladimir assures him they did and says that Estragon forgets everything. Estragon asks why Lucky and Pozzo didn't recognize them, if they knew each other, but Vladimir says, "That means nothing. I too pretended not to recognize them."

Vladimir is able to recognize people from his past, whereas Estragon's constant forgetfulness means he lives life in a kind of perpetual present. In pretending not to recognize Lucky and Pozzo, Vladimir perpetuates the cycle of characters refusing or failing to acknowledge other people's humanity and identity.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Estragon's one foot with the boot still on begins to hurt, while **Vladimir** ponders whether **Lucky** and **Pozzo** were the same people he knew from before, or different. A **boy** calls from off-stage and enters. Estragon and Vladimir yell at him to approach. The boy says he has a message from **Mr. Godot**. Estragon asks why the boy is so late, and the boy says it's not his fault.

Vladimir's confusion over Lucky and Pozzo's identities is linked to a confusion over time: is this day merely a repetition of the previous one, or is it a new day with different people? It is likely the former, as act two will imply (by being very similar to act one).

ACTIVE THEMES

The **boy** says he was afraid of **Lucky** and **Pozzo**, which is why he is late. **Vladimir** asks if the boy knows Lucky and Pozzo and whether he is from "these parts." The boy doesn't know them, but is from the area. **Estragon** doesn't believe the boy and shakes him angrily, but Vladimir tells him to calm down.

Although the boy might be another companion or might at least have a useful message from Godot, Estragon greets him angrily and violently.

ACTIVE THEMES

Estragon lets go of the **boy** and covers his face, telling **Vladimir** that he has been unhappy for longer than he can remember. Vladimir asks the boy to deliver his message and whether he has seen the boy before. The boy says no, and Vladimir asks if it was not him who came the day before. The boy says it wasn't him.

Again, Vladimir is attempting to ascertain to what degree his life is merely repeating itself, with the same people appearing every day and doing the same things.

ACTIVE THEMES

RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

The **boy** finally delivers his message: "Mr. Godot told me to tell you that he won't come this evening but surely tomorrow." **Vladimir** asks if the boy works for **Godot**, and the boy says he does; he looks after the goats. He says Godot is good and doesn't beat him, though he does beat the boy's brother, who minds the sheep. He says Godot feeds him well. Vladimir asks if the boy is happy, and the boy is unsure. Godot's arrival is the entire point of the characters' waiting and of Beckett's play itself. The revelation that he will not come is at once frustrating, funny, and sad.

From the boy's description, it is unclear whether Godot is really a way towards freedom or merely another form of domination, as he seems to be the boy's master.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Vladimir tells the **boy** he can leave, and the boy asks what message he should bring back to **Godot**. He asks the boy to tell Godot that he saw them. The boy leaves, as night comes. **Estragon** looks at the moon, saying that it is "pale for weariness." He leaves both his boots on the ground, saying that "another will come, just as...as...as me, but with smaller feet, and they'll make him happy."

Vladimir's message to Godot shows what he desperately wants: some acknowledgment of his identity and humanity. He wants to be recognized, in contrast to all of the times that characters like Lucky and Pozzo don't recognize him, day after day.

ACTIVE THEMES



RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Vladimir tells **Estragon** he can't go on with bare feet, and Estragon says that Christ did. Vladimir thinks Estragon is ridiculous to compare himself to Christ. Vladimir says they have nothing to do here, but says that tomorrow will be better, because **Godot** will come tomorrow. Estragon says that they should wait here, then, but Vladimir says they must take cover during the night.

Vladimir does not escape the trap of waiting for Godot, as he eagerly looks forward to tomorrow, when he is convinced that Godot will finally come. In the play's Postmodern setting, comparisons to Christ or other Biblical characters are deemed ridiculous.

ACTIVE THEMES





RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

Estragon looks at the tree and says it's a pity they don't have any rope. He asks **Vladimir** to remind him to bring rope tomorrow. He asks Vladimir how long they've been together, and Vladimir guesses fifty years. Estragon wonders aloud if they would have been better off alone, rather than together.

The characters' nonchalant consideration of hanging themselves is eerily absurd. By Vladimir's reckoning, he and Estragon have been repeating the same things over and over again for fifty years.

ACTIVE THEMES



Estragon says he and **Vladimir** "weren't made for the same road." Vladimir says that it is not certain and tells Estragon that they can still part now, if he'd like to. Estragon says it's not worth it. Estragon asks if they should go and Vladimir says, "Yes, let's go," but neither move.

Vladimir and Estragon ultimately decide to stay together as companions. The act ends with a final absurd gesture, as the characters are inexplicably trapped in their places, despite their willingness to leave now.

ACTIVE THEMES

