



Set Text Guide: Waiting for Godot

AS and A Level Drama and Theatre

Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Advanced GCE in Drama and Theatre (9DR0)

**Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE in
Drama and Theatre (9DR0)**

GCE Drama 2016: Waiting for Godot

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Summary

The entire play takes place in the same nondescript place. The stage directions are very specific throughout. When approaching the text with actors, a director should treat this as a gift from Beckett, as the comic timings and rhythms can be found by sticking to these directions. Of course, there is always room for interpretation, but don't look a gift horse in the mouth. The absurd nature of the text and dialogue may at first seem daunting, and the play is broken into two acts with no distinguished scenes. Honouring the specific stage directions should help the company to understand the rhythms of the piece. These can always be moved away from, but it is a good starting point from which to tackle the text.

Another thing to consider when starting the play, is that the absurd scenarios may seem devoid of clear meanings. Rather than concerning the production with any overriding meaning, it may be best at first to focus on small sections of the text and try to make these clear for yourselves. Hopefully a greater meaning will develop from this. The play has been interpreted in many different ways over the years, and your interpretation may or may not be entirely original. Just try not to force a meaning, and instead allow it to emerge naturally from the text.

Act One

Evening. A country road. A tree.

The play opens, and we find Estragon sitting on a low mound trying and failing to take off his boot. Vladimir, his companion, enters and greets him, asking where he spent the night, to which he replies *in a ditch*. Vladimir, the more philosophical of the two, muses that Estragon would be nothing if it weren't for him. They discuss the story of the two thieves in the Gospels, and why only one of the four accounts speaks of a thief being saved.

Estragon announces that he is leaving, but does not move. This is a recurring motif, as it becomes apparent that neither of the two men can leave. Vladimir explains the reason for this: they are waiting for Godot. We never meet Godot. Though Godot appears similar to God, it is worth noting that Beckett himself was quoted as saying that if he had meant God he would have said God, not Godot. The two men believe they are meeting Godot by a tree, which they are not even sure is this tree. They also have a warped perception of time, and don't know whether it is morning or evening, or what day it is.

Estragon falls asleep but is quickly woken by Vladimir, who feels lonely. He won't let Estragon tell him of his dream however, and he is quick to stop him doing so. Estragon poses the idea, not for the last time, that maybe they should part ways. Again, Vladimir states that his friend would not get far without him. Vladimir clearly has a higher status than Estragon, or at least, he feels he does. They argue, eventually coming together to discuss how they might hang themselves from the tree, but the logistics prove too troublesome. Instead, they decide to wait for Godot. Estragon asks for a carrot. Vladimir finds one after rummaging in his bag. They are quickly very amicable with each other. The way in which their relationship can change from friendly to hostile is akin to that of an old married couple.

Suddenly, a terrible cry is heard offstage. The two men huddle together for safety. Pozzo enters, with Lucky leading, a rope around his neck. At first, the men wonder whether he is Godot, but Pozzo tells them his name and asks if they have heard of him. They reply that they have not, mistaking his name for Bozzo. Pozzo orders Lucky around, until he is sitting on the stool eating chicken and drinking wine. Lucky is totally compliant and obedient towards Pozzo, who in turn, treats his slave with total disregard. While he is eating, Vladimir and Estragon inspect Lucky. They see he has a sore on his neck from the rope, and as they go to question him, Pozzo instructs them to leave him in peace. The men seem indifferent to Lucky's suffering, showing intrigue rather than empathy. Estragon asks whether he might have the bones of the chicken if Pozzo is finished with

them. Pozzo replies that though he doesn't want them, the priority must go to Lucky. Estragon asks Lucky, who doesn't reply. At this, Pozzo lets Estragon have the bones, hoping his slave will not be sick. Suddenly, Vladimir shouts that it is a scandal to treat Lucky in the way he does. Pozzo is unmoved by this, and absurdly asks how old Vladimir is before announcing that they must be going. He then begins debating with himself whether he should have another smoke of his pipe before he leaves.

Vladimir encourages Estragon to leave with him, but Pozzo interjects. He asks them to wait a little longer, and tells them they won't regret it. Estragon points out that they are in no hurry. This really encapsulates their situation, as they are always waiting, and therefore never in a hurry. Pozzo asks Vladimir to consider what might happen if they were to miss their appointment with Godot. Pozzo would like to meet Godot himself. He says that the more people he meets, the happier he becomes. Though Vladimir does not appear to have anything stopping him from leaving, the strange obligation he feels towards Godot keeps him here.

Estragon asks why Lucky doesn't put all the bags down when they are resting. Pozzo says that he will tell them. He makes sure that everyone is ready to listen, and comically prepares them before forgetting what the question was. When prompted, his answer is absurd. He explains that Lucky is free to put his bags down, but doesn't want to in order to impress him, so that Pozzo will keep him. This baffles Estragon and Vladimir. Pozzo implies that he has lots of slaves and Lucky is easily replaced. This seems to be a falsehood, as he then exclaims 'Atlas, son of Jupiter', which is not true.

Pozzo says that he is taking Lucky to the fair to sell him, but that it would be easier to simply kill him. This makes Lucky cry. Vladimir and Estragon then bizarrely fight over a handkerchief and who should wipe away his tears. Estragon wins this battle, and as he approaches Lucky, he is kicked in the shins. This is both a comic moment of slapstick, but also an indication of the inherent violence that has been inflicted on Lucky and that is now present in his behaviour. Pozzo says that their generation is no unhappier than the last, and that Lucky taught him this in his 60 years of service. Vladimir is incredulous as to why he would want to get rid of such a long-serving and faithful servant. It is not clear which generation theirs is, but this is perhaps a comment on the piece in that the time is non-specific as the human condition, and its themes do not change from time to time.

Bizarrely, Pozzo begins to cry, saying that he cannot bear the way Lucky is. Vladimir and Estragon catechise Lucky for being a bad slave to such a good master. It is a surprise to see this behaviour from Vladimir, who has just since been defending Lucky. Suddenly, Pozzo regains his composure and rhetorically asks whether he looks like a man who can be made to suffer.

Vladimir and Estragon discuss how memorable this evening has been. Pozzo has lost his pipe and as he searches for it, he realises that Vladimir has left without saying goodbye. Estragon explains that he would have burst, inferring that he has gone to the toilet. The irony here is that the actor has been on stage throughout, and this could be a knowing nod to this. Vladimir returns, disgruntled, and kicks over the stool. He is frustrated, waiting for Godot all day.

Eventually Pozzo declares that they must be going, due to their schedule. Vladimir feels that time has stopped. Pozzo prepares to speak, and once he has their attention he forgets his train of thought again. This starts a loop like the previous one, in which Vladimir suggests that he and Estragon should leave. Pozzo remembers that it is the night that he wanted to talk about. He then delivers a dramatic and lyrical monologue about the night. Shortly after, Estragon and Vladimir are bored yet again. Pozzo suggests they watch Lucky dance or Lucky thinking out loud. Estragon wants to see him dance first, and then think. Lucky dances a ridiculous dance for them, and the men try to guess the name of the dance.

Next, all three men appear to lose their train of thought, and have forgotten what they were talking about. These moments of forgetfulness allow for the action to reset and repeat itself, as it so often does. This gives the play such an unusual feeling of time and timelessness.

Vladimir asks to see Lucky think. First, he must have his hat returned, which has fallen off during his dance. Lucky begins an absurd and completely nonsensical monologue in which he thinks out loud. As Lucky begins to repeat himself, the others become annoyed and try to stop him by throwing themselves on top of him. Finally, Vladimir removes his hat and he is silenced.

Pozzo orders them to lift Lucky up, but he is unable to stand without the bags on him. It is as though he is dependent on his own suffering, in the same way Vladimir and Estragon torture themselves in waiting for someone who never comes.

Pozzo has lost his watch, and they all listen for the ticking. This is symbolic of the lack of time in this place. The three characters begin to say goodbye to each other, but no one moves. This goes on for a while, and can be a very funny moment, as they all appear to be stuck rooted to the spot. Eventually, Pozzo cracks the whip, and Lucky leads him off.

Left alone again, the men remark that at least the encounter passed the time. They again consider leaving, before remembering that they can't as they are waiting for Godot. Vladimir points out how much Pozzo and Lucky had changed, implying that he recognises them from the past. However, even if he hadn't seen them before, people always change.

A boy enters with a message from Godot. He has been waiting for a while, but was afraid to make himself seen for fear of Pozzo and Lucky. Estragon doesn't believe him and violently shakes the boy. Estragon appears to be at breaking point. Vladimir asks the boy if he was here yesterday, but the boy says he was not. He delivers his message, which is that Godot won't be here this evening but surely will be tomorrow. Narratively we have almost reached the end of the first act, and this revelation leaves us in the same place we started. Vladimir tells the boy to let Godot know that he saw them. This is Vladimir desperately reaching out for acknowledgement of their existence. The boy returns to his master. Though they have been waiting for Godot in order to free them, it seems that Godot himself keeps the boy as a slave.

The act ends with the two men discussing whether they would be better off apart, though they decide to stay together as companions, having done so for fifty years already. They decide to leave to find cover for the night, but comically the curtain comes down with them rooted to the spot, still unable to leave.

Act Two

The second act opens on the next day, but the same time and same place. Much of the action in this act is a repeat of the first, showing how time is repetitive in the world of the play. Vladimir enters, singing a nonsensical song.

Estragon enters, and shirks away as Vladimir tries to embrace him. Vladimir asks whether *they* beat him. Estragon does not want to talk about it, though he eventually does embrace his friend.

Vladimir says that he is having a good day, and despite having missed Estragon last night, he was still happy. Estragon says that he also feels better when he is on his own. Vladimir understands that Estragon must come back to him because he is dependent on him, though he also appreciates that he needs Estragon too and would be lonely without him. Vladimir says he would have stopped Estragon from doing whatever he did to receive the beating. However, as is the case through the play, suffering is never deserved or brought about for any particular reason; it is unexplained and unescapable.

Estragon has forgotten yesterday, and doesn't even recognise the tree. Here we begin to realise that they wait here day after day and only Vladimir seems to have any capacity for remembering the days that have been. Estragon has also forgotten Pozzo and Lucky, though he does remember a *lunatic* who kicked him in the shin and the man who gave him a bone.

Estragon continues repeating himself, asking if it would be best if they parted, or even if he killed him like the billions of others. Here he suggests that suffering is widespread and universal. After all, everyone dies eventually.

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The men begin to struggle to find things to talk about, desperate to fill the silences so as not to be confronted with the emptiness of their existence. They humorously talk at length about not being able to talk. Then they think about thinking.

Vladimir turns his attention to the tree, which has leaves that weren't there the day before. Estragon sees this as proof that they weren't here yesterday. He says that they have been doing nothing and talking about nothing for fifty years. However, Vladimir lifts the leg of Estragon's trousers to reveal a lump where Lucky kicked him, proving they were here yesterday.

Again, Estragon falls asleep, but wakes up startled from a dream. He tries to tell Vladimir about the dream but Vladimir cuts him off. He reminds him that they must stay here and wait for Godot, but Estragon wants to leave. They find Lucky's hat, and perform a complex and precise exchange of hats. In the stage directions, the order of this is precisely laid out. It is advisable for the actors to stick to this as the precision is what will give it the comedy.

Estragon briefly leaves the stage, and comes back declaring that *they* are coming. The men look out at either side of the stage. Pozzo and Lucky return. Pozzo is now blind. Lucky stops when he sees them, which causes Pozzo to bump into him and fall down. He is unable to get back up. Vladimir is delighted that they are here and thinks that this will enable them to get through the evening. Estragon thinks Pozzo to be Godot, but Vladimir corrects him. It is unclear as to why Pozzo cannot get up, but they decide to help him after asking for another bone. They also consider beating Lucky as punishment for what he did yesterday. Here we see that the men have become as bad as Pozzo, and have gone from going to help Pozzo to intentionally causing more suffering. While Pozzo is still crying out for help, Vladimir begins contemplating what they are doing here, concluding that they are merely waiting. Pozzo offers them money to help, but Vladimir doesn't want to lose this diversion as without it they are bored to death. After numerous failed attempts, they help him back up to his feet, holding him in position.

Pozzo enquires what the time is, though neither seems sure whether it is morning or evening. Vladimir asks how he went blind, and Pozzo's response is that the blind do not know the concept of time and do not perceive it. Estragon says he is leaving. Pozzo asks where they are, but doesn't seem to know, and simply describes the nothingness. Pozzo asks Estragon to check on Lucky, who hasn't moved. He goes over to him and kicks him repeatedly while Pozzo shouts *up pig!* Ironically, Estragon hurts his foot doing so, and Lucky begins to move. Estragon tries to take his boot off, but fails, before sitting down to sleep.

Vladimir asks if Lucky will sing or recite some thoughts again, but Pozzo explains that he is mute. Pozzo and Lucky leave, frustrated by Vladimir's questioning of time. Vladimir wakes Estragon, not wanting to be alone. As usual, he tries to explain his dream but is quickly silenced. Estragon asks if he is sure that Pozzo wasn't Godot. Vladimir, though initially sure, begins to doubt himself and does not know what to think any more.

The boy enters, as in the first act, with the same message from Godot, that he won't be here today but will surely come tomorrow. We already know that this is not to be believed, as the promise has already been broken once. Vladimir asks what Godot does, to which the boy replies *nothing*. Again, he asks the boy to let Godot know that he saw him, shaking him violently to make sure the message is delivered. It is as though he is absolutely desperate to be acknowledged. The boy exits.

Estragon wants to leave and to go far away, but Vladimir tells him they can't as they must be here tomorrow to wait for Godot. Estragon suggests they hang themselves from the tree. They discover again that the logistics don't work. Their situation is so futile that they can't even kill themselves. This is both funny and tragic. Beckett called the play a tragicomedy, and the ending encapsulates this, as the two men announce that they are leaving, but are unable to move.

Characters

Vladimir

Or Didi. One of the play's two main characters, and arguably the protagonist. He seems to be more aware of the absurdity of their situation. He philosophises, and strives for understanding. He remembers people they have seen. He is outraged at Pozzo's treatment of Lucky, though he does nothing to stop it. Though he seems more intelligent than his companion, he relies on Estragon and feels lonely and abandoned if left alone for a moment.

Estragon

Or Gogo. The second of the main characters and Vladimir's companion. He is less assured than Vladimir and looks to him for help and protection. His memory is terrible, and he does not remember people and events from one day to the next. Though he may appear foolish in comparison to Vladimir, at times his blunt statements can be quite profound.

Pozzo

He passes the spot where Vladimir and Estragon are waiting and provides them with a diversion that passes the time. He is cold and heartless in his treatment of Lucky, his slave. He often appears delusional, making false statements, and losing his train of thought. He returns in the second act blind.

Lucky

Pozzo's slave. He carries Pozzo's bags and stool, and has a rope around his neck. Pozzo only addresses him as Pig. He is silent throughout, apart from a rambling and nonsensical monologue delivered in Act One. He suffers throughout, and is abused by all the other characters throughout.

Boy

He brings a message for the men that Godot is not coming today but will come tomorrow. When he returns in the second act, he claims to be a different boy. It is unclear whether this is the case, or whether he, like Estragon and Pozzo, has forgotten the previous day. It appears that Godot is his master.

Social, cultural and historical background

Born in Dublin in 1906, Samuel Beckett studied French, English and Italian at Trinity College, Dublin. After graduating, he befriended the Irish novelist James Joyce while teaching in Paris, and his first published work was an essay about his friend. He wrote his most famous trilogy of novels from 1951 to 1953; *Molloy*, *Malone Dies* and *The Unnameable*.

Waiting for Godot was his first play, and began his association with the Theatre of the Absurd, which would later influence playwrights such as Tom Stoppard and Harold Pinter.

His later notable plays include *Endgame* in 1958 and *Krapp's Last Tape* in 1959. He also went on to write even more experimental plays, such as the 30-second play *Breath* in 1969. In 1969, he was awarded the Nobel Prize. He died in Paris in 1989.

Samuel Beckett wrote his first play, *Waiting for Godot*, in French in 1948. It premiered in a tiny theatre in Paris in 1953. Later, Beckett himself translated the play into English.

The play takes place in an unspecified time and place. There is no explicit reference to any historical events, apart from the fact that it takes place in a world after the writing of the Bible. It is worth noting that the Second World War was not long since finished, and the nihilistic and pessimistic view of the world may have been influenced by this.

One of the enduring lures of the play is the search for its meaning. This is a debate that has raged on for over half a century, and will doubtless continue for many more. Because of the stripped-back landscape of the play's setting, and the, at times, nonsensical rambling of its protagonists, the play invites the audience to interpret their own meaning.

Beckett himself directed a version in 1975. He was always ambiguous about the play's meaning, realising that part of its success was this ambiguity. He became frustrated that people were so keen to place meaning where maybe there was none. When asked whether it was a naturalistic play, his response was:

'It is a game, everything is a game. When all four of them are lying on the ground, that cannot be handled naturalistically. That has got to be done artificially, balletically. Otherwise everything becomes an imitation, an imitation of reality [...]. It should become clear and transparent, not dry. It is a game in order to survive.'

See the themes (below) for a few insights into different interpretations, but ultimately it is for each individual production of the play to decide on its own interpretation. As mentioned earlier, try not to box yourselves in too early, and allow the meaning to reveal itself to you, rather than imposing pre-conceived ideas on the piece.

Themes

Time

The play exists in a timeless era. The characters seem to have no concept of time passing, apart from Vladimir, who is confused by it. Among the many interpretations of the piece, one is a study of boredom. It is suggested that Estragon and Vladimir have been together for fifty years, but this, like all time in the play, is an unclear figure. The way in which phrases and sections of dialogue repeat throughout gives it a timeless feel. Ultimately, at the end, the two main characters are at the same point in which they started.

The biblical

Many have speculated that Godot is God. However, Beckett was quoted as saying if he had meant for him to be God he would have called him that. It could be considered that the two men are in limbo, or even hell. They talk about the Gospels and their different accounts of the same tale in Act One. When Estragon has bare feet, he compares himself to Christ.

Suffering

All the characters face perpetual suffering. Though it does not seem apparent that there is any physical force keeping Vladimir and Estragon in this place, they are resigned to their suffering and cannot bring themselves to leave. Lucky has suffered for many years at the hands of Pozzo, though he seems conditioned to accept this suffering and cannot escape it. Even the boy talks of how his brother suffers at the hands of Godot. Beckett paints a world wrought with suffering.

Status

The obvious example of status is the relationship between Pozzo and Lucky. However, there is a more intricate balance of status between Vladimir and Estragon. Vladimir assumes a higher status for the most part, as he has a greater depth of thought than his companion. However, when left alone he panics and longs for his friend. They are both codependent in this sense, and when they encounter Pozzo and Lucky, they might even assume the same status as each other.

Life and death

There is an argument to say that this place is limbo, a place between life and death. The two men twice discuss killing themselves from the tree in order to escape the tedium of their boring existence. Though they are existing here, they do not appear to be living. In the second act, both Pozzo and Lucky appear close to death, both now finding it hard to stand, with blindness and muteness between them.

Boredom

Waiting in a place with nothing but a tree proves to be excruciatingly boring. The two men are desperately seeking entertainment to pass the time. They cannot bear silence as it is a reminder of the nothingness and the emptiness of their existence. When Lucky and Pozzo arrive, they relish having some entertainment. This way they will make it through the evening.

Companionship

Estragon and Vladimir need each other. It is suggested they may have been together for 50 years. Though they talk of separating, Vladimir knows that Estragon would not survive on his own, but also that he would not be able to cope without his companion.

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Pozzo and Lucky have a master–slave relationship, though in the second act we even see that they are unable to separate.

The human condition

In the sparse world of the play, there is little but the human condition on display. All the characters are doomed to their fate of perpetual suffering. Though it seems they could end their own suffering if they only would, none ever do. Philosophically there are numerous ways of interpreting what (if anything) Beckett meant to show about the human condition. Perhaps it is best not to know, and simply to treat it as an observation of the way humanity is.

Resources

Recommended edition

Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett ISBN: 0-571-22911-5

Further reading

'Beckett, Samuel'. *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. Ed. Margaret Drabble. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985

A Reader's Guide to Samuel Beckett by Hugh Kenner Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973

No-Thing Is Left to Tell: Zen/Chaos Theory in the Dramatic Art of Samuel Beckett by John Leeland Kundert-Gibbs, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999

Online resources

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2003/jan/04/theatre.beckettat100>

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2009/mar/08/samuel-beckett-waiting-for-godot>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/aug/10/waiting-for-godot-book-that-changed-me-nicolas-lezard>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ioan-marc-jones/interpreting-waiting-for-godot_b_5751044.html

Useful soundtracks to use in the classroom

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=257FHDkNyzE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h86RbSESCP4>

Practical exploration activities

Actors

The following exercises are designed to help theatre makers practically explore some of the key characters, themes and ideas that are central to *Waiting for Godot*. Some of the exercises may help actors to consider how key roles might be communicated and realised from 'page to stage'.

Waiting for Godot is a tragicomedy. In order to achieve this, although the context is sometimes absurd, the actors should try to approach each moment truthfully. Beckett includes a lot of specific stage directions; it is advisable to use these as an aid amidst the chaos of the narrative. Clear and bold choices will allow the audience to draw their own interpretations from the play. Don't be daunted by the absurdity and the lack of clarity the characters show in their thought. Instead, work through moment to moment and make a decision for each.

Off-text improvisation is a useful explorative technique to consider the 'before and after' life of the play. You might explore moments that are alluded to but not seen, for example:

- What happens if Estragon or Vladimir are left alone for an extended period of time?
- If Lucky could talk to us without Pozzo present, what might he say?
- Where do the men go at night?
- Who is Godot? Can we meet him?
- Are there actually two boys, and if so, how might they discuss Godot in private?

Hot-seating is a valuable and exciting method to develop characterisation. It helps actors to 'flesh out' their understanding of the characters. Using their imagination and the information provided in the given circumstances will allow the actors to consider the voice, attitude, and physicality of the character they are exploring.

A more theatrical way to explore hot-seating might be to combine this exercise with an off-text improvisation. For example, following on from the examples above, after we have watched a scene play out, we could immediately interview the character and ask them probing questions to discover thoughts the actor may not have considered.

Exploring accent and dialect can also help actors to consider character choices. The play was written by an Irish writer, originally in French, and translated into English. This and the nonspecific location allow for total freedom of choice in terms of accent and dialect. Be aware that accent and dialect do contribute to an audience's understanding of characters though, so make decisions and stick to them.

Non-verbal communication is often a highly effective way to explore character, subtext, tension and silence. How does each character behave in moments of silence? For example, you might see how different characters behave when they are on their own. How does this differ, if it does, from how they behave when they are around other characters?

Key scene work / alternative viewpoints

Another useful exercise to consider involves **staging and rehearsing a key scene with a particular focus** and then trying it in an alternative style. For example, the actors might explore status in conjunction with the director. The director calls out numbers from 1 to 20 for the actors in the space: 1 is the lowest status, that of a slug, if you will; 20 is the highest status, the king perhaps. By playing this game we can begin to discover how bodies in space can signify status, and this might give us a good indication of how to stage certain pivotal moments in the play, where status plays a crucial role. This is especially interesting for exploring status between both Pozzo and Lucky, and between

Vladimir and Estragon. How does the status change through the play? Does it shift dramatically at any points? For example, when Lucky and Pozzo enter.

Designers

The following exercises and ideas are designed to help theatre makers explore some of the opportunities, themes and ideas that are central to *Waiting for Godot*. Some of the suggestions may help designers to consider how key aspects of the play might be communicated and realised and from 'page to stage'.

It might be useful to set up a **production meeting and pitch** for your student designers, as this will help them to consider the play as a whole and root their practical ideas in aims and intentions. Remember that audience impact is key, and that setting up small groups of potential theatre makers might help students to consider the text in a holistic way. For example, a group could consist of a set, costume, sound and lighting designer; smaller groups simply take on more than one area of responsibility. It is important that each designer questions the aims and intentions of the others, so that each member of the production team is able to think in a holistic and collaborative way. The design 'pitch' could then be offered to the teacher (producer). This is a useful discussion exercise that also lends itself to research, images and presentations. It can work at the start of a scheme of work to initiate ideas/contextualise themes and key moments, or at the end of a scheme of work as a way of ensuring all aspects of production are considered. It would also make an excellent 'active' revision session in time for the exam. TIP – each member of the production team should justify their ideas with key moments from the play.

Creating a model box of a potential set design is a useful exercise and can be as simple or as elaborate as required. It is often useful for students to see how each scene will be played in a potential space, and by creating a model box they will be able to refer more easily to their ideas in a specific space. Though the setting is apparently bare and vacuous, do not let this limit your design ideas. Instead, see this as an opportunity to work within a tight framework, which can often produce fantastic results. Remember: less is often more.

Exploring different music and sound effects for key scenes is another effective way of considering how design can play an important role in the development of a key idea or theme. There is the song that Vladimir sings at the start of Act Two: might this have accompanying music or is it *a capella*? What sound effects might be used to create the timeless feeling of this place?

How can lighting help to create shadow and suspense? Have a **look at previous productions and lighting designs** to see how other theatre makers have used lighting to create impact. If you don't have access to lighting, you might want to consider the effect of torches or candles. (Safety first!) Lighting can help signify the passing of time, or in this case, time standing still.

Another useful exercise that helps to build the world of the play and develop ideas for performance is **sourcing and designing potential costumes**. Research is key, and will help students who are initially daunted about the thought of 'designing'. They don't have to be great artists to create great designs. The main thing is that they approach the design of the production in a holistic way. Is their costume design expressionistic, representational, or more naturalistic? What is their aim and intention? Does their costume design root the production and performance in a particular time period or style? Again, as the period is so vague, this is completely open to interpretation, and it may be that the direction the play takes informs this and other design decisions. Don't feel that these decisions need to be made right away, and it may be that new things emerge as the process happens.

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