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# The Theatre Of The Absurd



## Synopsis

In 1953, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* premiered at a tiny avant-garde theatre in Paris; within five years, it had been translated into more than twenty languages and seen by more than a million spectators. Its startling popularity marked the emergence of a new type of theatre whose proponents—Beckett, Ionesco, Genet, Pinter, and others—shattered dramatic conventions and paid scant attention to psychological realism, while highlighting their characters' inability to understand one another. In 1961, Martin Esslin gave a name to the phenomenon in his groundbreaking study of these playwrights who dramatized the absurdity at the core of the human condition. Over four decades after its initial publication, Esslin's landmark book has lost none of its freshness. The questions these dramatists raise about the struggle for meaning in a purposeless world are still as incisive and necessary today as they were when Beckett's tramps first waited beneath a dying tree on a lonely country road for a mysterious benefactor who would never show. Authoritative, engaging, and eminently readable, *The Theatre of the Absurd* is nothing short of a classic: vital reading for anyone with an interest in the theatre.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Exciting and stimulating...a very useful reference work and a standard text book.”  
• Literary Review

In 1953, Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" premiered at a tiny avant-garde theatre in Paris; within five years, it had been translated into more than twenty languages and seen by more than a million spectators. Its startling popularity marked the emergence of a new type of theatre whose proponents--Beckett, Ionesco, Genet, Pinter, and others--shattered dramatic conventions and paid scant attention to psychological realism, while highlighting their characters' inability to understand one another. In 1961, Martin Esslin gave a name to the phenomenon in his groundbreaking study of these playwrights who dramatized the absurdity at the core of the human condition. Over four decades after its initial publication, Esslin's landmark book has lost none of its freshness. The questions these dramatists raise about the struggle for meaning in a purposeless world are still as incisive and necessary today as they were when Beckett's tramps first waited beneath a dying tree on a lonely country road for a mysterious benefactor who would never show. Authoritative, engaging, and eminently readable, *The Theatre of the Absurd* is nothing short of a classic: vital reading for anyone with an interest in the theatre.

This book is well organized and thorough. If you want to learn about the theater of the absurd, this is the way to do it. You will notice that the author is very defensive, constantly defending the right of the theater of the absurd to exist. This is because the book was originally written when it was still controversial, and it always will be to some people, but sixty some years after its advent, the plays are still being performed worldwide and their influence on today's theater continues. Thanks to two updates, Esslin was able to gain a better picture of the place of the theater of the absurd in the bigger picture of the history of drama. Without the end of chapter 8 and the entire chapter 9, the book would be very dated, but as it stands now, it will serve readers for a long, long time.

I hate this book.

A classic, for which I only had earlier editions. There is no more knowledgeable source on the subject than this text.

I read this first in High School. Then read a bunch of the plays. Re-reading the expanded version took me back to those plays, which still hold up brilliantly. A must have for drama peeps.

I was reading an old library copy of the 2nd edition and discovered there was a third, downloaded it to kindle on my iPad, and am disappointed. The text has several errors in it, like the book was

scanned and OCR software was used, but not thoroughly error checked by a real person. Many errors are easy enough to figure out, but some are more challenging. Also important formatting was lost such as block indentation of quotes. As I am reading this for a school paper, it is important to know what's a quote and what isn't. Would love to get a corrected version of this otherwise great book.

Excellent

This edition didn't have all the information as the prior one I had, the full discussion of Pinter for one received in superb condition. thank you.

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