Waiting for Godot Essay

Humanities Religion / AP English Language & Composition

In <u>Waiting for Godot</u>, the feeling of uncertainty it produces, the ebb and flow of this uncertainty—from the hope of discovering the identity of Godot to its repeated disappointment—are themselves the essence of the play. Any endeavor to arrive at a clear and certain interpretation by establishing the identity of Godot through critical analysis would be as foolish as trying to discover the clear outlines hidden behind the chiaroscuro of a painting by Rembrandt by scraping away the paint.

Yet it is only natural that plays written in so unusual and baffling a convention should be felt to be in special need of an explanation that, as it were, would uncover their hidden meaning and translate it into everyday language…such attempts are doomed to failure.

~Martin Esslin,"Samuel Beckett: The Search for Self" from <u>The Theater of the Absurd</u>

Your assignment: For this essay, provide an interpretation of the play *Waiting for Godot* that considers all of the lenses from which we've considered the play. ***PLEASE DON'T START YOUR ESSAY WITH THE FOLLOWING GAMBITS/LINES OR ANY VARIATION OF THEM:***

- "How does one interpret *Waiting for Godot*?"
- "*Waiting for Godot* is a very confusing play."
- "Webster's Dictionary defines 'waiting' as…"

As you write about this question, you should consider our viewings of *Waiting for Godot* and the various lenses through which one can interpret the novel, as well as how the central elements / ideas of the play extend to the mockumentary *Waiting for Guffman*, which we'll watch in class.

Thus, in crafting your essay, consider the following ways of viewing the play; a successful paper will consider all of the views from the readings / discussion:

- **Philosophically,** as emblematic of existentialism;
- **Dramaturgically,** as an example of the Theater of the Absurd;
- **Literarily,** as reflective of the human condition;
- **Theologically,** interpreting it through Christian symbols / motifs;
- **Psychologically**, as reflective of Jungian archetypes

Of course, you may use elements of discussion from both English and Religion.

Here are some links to help you along the way:

- *[Waiting for Guffman Link from Internet Movie Database](#)* (IMDB) (link)
- [Cincinnati Shakespeare Company site for *Godot*](#) (link)
- [Full-text E-book: Esslin's *The Theater of the Absurd*](#) (link)
- [Existentialism on the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) (link)

You can also find a copy of the *Godot* script and a summary on [Mr. Eble's Godot page](#) (link)