Endgame

By Samuel Beckett
Directed by Geoff Elliott
October 19 – November 23, 2013
# Endgame

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A NOISE WITHIN'S EDUCATION PROGRAMS MADE POSSIBLE IN PART BY:
Endgame: Characters

NAGG
Hamm’s father who has no legs and lives in a trash bin next to Nell.

NELL
Hamm’s mother who has no legs and lives in a trash bin next to Nagg.

HAMM
Blind and immobilized master to Clov. He is the son of Nagg and Nell.

CLOV
Hamm’s servant who can see and move but is unable to sit.

ENDGAME AND CHESS
An endgame is the term used in chess to describe the point in a match when the outcome is inevitable. One player is guaranteed victory after a certain number of moves. Beckett uses this as a metaphor for life; regardless of the moves one makes, the end is inevitable from the start. Other imagery from chess include that Nagg and Nell are very pale/white while Hamm and Clov are very “red-faced”.

Like the king in chess, Hamm is the most powerful piece on the board but also the most vulnerable since he has limited mobility. Hamm also says, “Me to play,” a saying that chess players use to indicate it is their turn to move. Clov, Nag, and Nell can only move according to Hamm’s orders. If Hamm is the king, what pieces would Clov, Nag or Nell be? Why?
ENDGAME is a single act play with four characters set in a shelter. Hamm, his servant Clov, and his parents Nell and Nagg all stay in the room, each with their own weaknesses, causing them to be dependent on one another. Nell and Nagg are both legless and live in two trash cans alongside one another. Hamm is blind and immobilized, but he controls access to the cupboard containing food necessary for survival. Clov moves Hamm around the room and completes simple tasks such as opening the curtains to view the nothingness outside and fetching Hamm’s stuffed dog. Throughout the play Hamm engages his servant in mind games meant to distract him from his terror of dying.
SAMUEL BARCLAY BECKETT was born at Cooldrinach in Foxrock, County Dublin, on 13 April 1906. He was the second of two sons of a middle-class Protestant couple (his father managed a surveying firm) and grew up away from the rebellion waged nearby. Though quite energetic, he enjoyed even as a small boy the quiet of solitude. He studied at Earlsfort House in Dublin, and then at Portora Royal School in Enniskillen (where Oscar Wilde had gone) where he first began to learn French, one of the two languages in which he would write. A well-rounded athlete, Beckett excelled especially in cricket, tennis, and boxing in his school days.

Though he continued with sports, his attention turned increasingly to academics when at 17 he entered Trinity College, choosing French and Italian as his subjects. Beckett enjoyed the vibrant theater scene of post-independence Dublin, preferring revivals of J.M. Synge plays. Moreover, he had the opportunity to watch American films and discover the silent comedies of Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin that would crucially influence his interest in the vaudevillian tramp.

After graduation, Beckett traveled to Paris where he first met the fellow Dubliner who would become a seminal influence and close friend, James Joyce. In addition to acting as one of Joyce’s favored assistants in the construction of the Work in Progress (later to be titled Finnegans Wake), Beckett began writing himself, inspired by the vibrant Parisian literary circle. In 1930, he published his first poem, “Whoroscope,” winning a reward of ten pounds in a poetry competition. Shortly after, he published his brief but groundbreaking Proust, a study of the recently deceased author whom Beckett admired so much; the work at once illuminated its subject but also helped the fledgling and unsure artist shape his own aesthetic. When he returned to Dublin later that year to lecture at Trinity, Beckett was writing his first stories — which would later comprise More Pricks Than Kicks (1934).
Beckett was restless in his teaching posts, and his reluctance to settle down in a respectable career worried his family, especially his mother from whom he became estranged for several years. Returning to Paris in 1932, he wrote his first novel, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*. While reminiscent in its digressive tendencies of Fielding and Sterne, *Dream* was also highly autobiographical, a powerful indication that Beckett was emerging from Joyce’s shadow and developing his own voice. Out of money, he went back to Dublin and then moved temporarily to London where he worked on much of his next novel, *Murphy*. Still without a steady source of income (his works were not selling, and *Murphy*, which had been turned down by dozens of publishers, would not appear until 1938), he moved constantly for the next few years before settling permanently in Paris in 1937.

Walking home late one night with some friends, Beckett was nearly killed when he was stabbed by a “pimp.” In hospital, Joyce looked after his young friend, paying his expenses and bringing around numerous visitors. Recuperating, Beckett also received attention from a French acquaintance, Suzanne Deschevaux-Dusmesnil, who would soon become his life companion (and wife, though not until 1961).

When Paris was invaded in 1941, Beckett and Suzanne joined the Resistance. Later they were forced to flee when their cell was betrayed, leaving their apartment only hours before the Gestapo arrived. They took refuge in Roussillon, in the south of France, where Beckett worked on a farm in exchange for room and board. There he continued work on a novel he had begun in Paris, *Watt*. After the Germans were defeated and the couple returned to Paris in 1945, Beckett travelled to Ireland to visit his mother. He claimed to have had while sitting in her room an artistic revelation: “I became aware of my own folly. Only then did I begin to write the things I feel.” And only then did Beckett began to write primarily in French, finding greater linguistic possibilities in a language that he famously said had no style. In his second language, he enjoyed a period (1947-1950) that is certainly his most prolific and that many consider his finest. His first French novel, *Mercier et Camier*—which, with its wandering duo, minimalist style, and insistence on repetition, predicts the concerns and form of *Waiting for Godot*—, was not published until years later. In this time, he also wrote his famous novel trilogy (*Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*). Also, in 1947, he wrote his first play, *Eleutheria*, which he would not allow to be published during his lifetime and which, after his death, became a cause of great controversy when Beckett’s American publisher, Barney Rosset, released an English translation against the wishes of the Beckett estate. In 1948-49, he also wrote *Waiting for Godot*. Its production in Paris in January 1953, by the director and actor Roger Blin (with whom Beckett would develop a lifelong friendship), brought the artist his first real public success both in and outside of France.
In the 1950s and 1960s, Beckett’s playwriting continued with a series of masterpieces, including *Endgame*, *Krapp’s Last Tape*, and *Happy Days*. He involved himself in various productions of his plays across Europe and in the United States, wrote his first radio plays, and created remarkably innovative prose fiction, including the epic *How It Is* (1961) and the haunting *The Lost Ones* (1970). Worldwide appreciation of his work growing, he received in 1969 the Nobel Prize (the third Irishman of the century to be so honored). Characteristically, he was unhappy with the increased public attention that accompanied the prize and in response to a demand for a new work chose instead to release the still unpublished *Mercier and Camier*. At this time, he also underwent successful operations on his eyes to correct the cataracts that had been plaguing him for years.

The 1970s were a less prolific period, though he managed some new projects, including television plays for the BBC, and continued to interest himself in productions of his theatrical works. In 1977, he began the autobiographical *Company* and in the early 1980s, crafted more prose pieces (including *Ill Seen Ill Said* and *Worstward Ho*) as well as more plays (including *Rockaby* and *Ohio Impromptu*). His last major work, the prose fiction *Stirrings Still*, was written in 1986.

In the same year, Beckett began to suffer from onsetting emphysema. After his first hospitalization, he wrote in bed his final work, the poem “What is the Word”. Moved into a nursing home, Le Tiers Temps, his deteriorating health prevented him from writing, and his efforts were given instead to translation of his works. Suzanne died on 17 July 1989, and Beckett followed her on 22 December. He is buried in Montparnasse Cemetery in Paris.

—Benjamin Strong
*Originally written for* 
The Samuel Beckett Endpage
# Endgame: Beckett Timeline

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<th>Event</th>
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<td>1906</td>
<td>On April 13th, Samuel Barclay Beckett is born in Foxrock, Dublin County, Ireland. He is the second son of William and Mary Roe Beckett</td>
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<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Receives Bachelor of Arts from Trinity College in Dublin majoring in French and Italian</td>
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<td>1928</td>
<td>Meets fellow Dubliner, James Joyce in Paris and the two writers become friends</td>
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<td>1929</td>
<td>Writes “Dante…Bruno. Vico…Joyce,” his first published work. It is an essay defending James Joyce’s “Work in Progress” which later turned out to be <em>Finnegans Wake</em></td>
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<td>1930</td>
<td>Publishes first poem, “Whoroscope,” and wins ten pounds in a poetry competition</td>
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<td>1931</td>
<td>Receives his Master of Arts degree from Trinity College. Begins to lecture on Romantic Languages at Trinity before leaving abruptly. Leaves Ireland and begins to wander through Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Writes <em>Dreams of Fair of Middling Women</em>. It is Beckett’s first novel but is not published until 1992</td>
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<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Publishes first novel <em>More Pricks Than Kicks</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Moves to Paris permanently after living briefly in England and Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Stabbed on the streets in Paris by a panhandler. A piano student named Suzanne Deschevaux-Dumesnil comes to his rescue and becomes his life-long companion</td>
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<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Joins the French Resistance with Suzanne after the German invasion of France during World War II</td>
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<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Beckett’s Resistance group is betrayed to the Gestapo. He escapes and flees to Rousillion in southern France</td>
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<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Returns to Paris with Suzanne Awarded the Croix de Guerre for his work in the Resistance movement. Visits his mother in Ireland and has an artistic revelation, leading him to write primarily in French.</td>
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<td>1946</td>
<td>Begins writing novel trilogy: <em>Molly, Malone Dies, and The Unnamable</em> in French</td>
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<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Writes first play, <em>Eleutheria</em>. It is not published until after his death</td>
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<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Finished writing <em>En Attendant Godot</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td><em>En Attendant Godot</em> premieres in Paris and brings Beckett international fame</td>
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<td>1954</td>
<td>Translates <em>En Attendant Godot</em> into the English <em>Waiting for Godot</em></td>
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<td>1956</td>
<td>Writes <em>Fin de Partie</em> in Ussy, France. Writes <em>All That Fall</em>, his first radio play. It is broadcast on BBC the following year</td>
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<td>1957</td>
<td><em>Fin de Partie</em> premieres at the Royal Court Theatre in London</td>
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<td>1958</td>
<td><em>Endgame</em>, the English translation of <em>Fin de Partie</em> premieres in London to mixed reviews</td>
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<td>1961</td>
<td>Marries Suzanne in England on March 25th</td>
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<td>1964</td>
<td>Makes his only trip to the United States, arriving in New York to film “Film” directed by Alan Schneider and starring Buster Keaton</td>
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<td>1965</td>
<td>Writes his first teleplay, <em>Eh Joe</em>. It is broadcast the next year</td>
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<td>1969</td>
<td>Receives the Nobel Prize in Literature and refuses to attend the ceremony</td>
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<td>1982</td>
<td>Writes <em>Catastrophe</em> and dedicates it to imprisoned Czech dramatist Vaclav Havel</td>
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<td>1988</td>
<td>JoAnna Akalaïtis directs a production of <em>Endgame</em>, setting the play in a subway tunnel and including music. Beckett criticizes the changes and his publishers, Grove Press, took legal action against the American Repertory Theatre</td>
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<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Suzanne dies on July 17th. Beckett follows her and passes on December 22nd at the age of 83</td>
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THEATRE OF THE ABSURD

THEATRE OF THE ABSURD was a phrase used by the critic Martin Esslin in 1962 to describe the work of various post-war European playwrights including Ionesco, Genet, Adamov, and Beckett. Influenced by existentialism, with the idea that each individual is free and responsible to give meaning to life, absurdism goes further to say that there is no meaning to the world beyond what we as individuals give to it. This loss of meaning and identity can create an atmosphere of despair, an “existential crisis”. Most existentialists promote the idea of that it is the individual’s responsibility to persist through these encounters with the absurd.

Albert Camus: “A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty is a familiar world. But in a universe suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity” — The Myth of Sisyphus, 1942.

Eugene Ionesco: “Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose... cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is losr; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless” — Dans les armes de la ville, 1957

Martin Esslin: “The Theatre of the Absurd, however, can be seen as the reflection of what seems to be the attitude most genuinely representative of our own time. The hallmark of this attitude is its sense that the certitudes and unshakable basic assumptions of former ages have been swept away, that they have been tested and found wanting, that they have been discredited as cheap and somewhat childish illusions. The decline of religious faith was masked until the end of the Second World War by the substitute religions of faith in progress, nationalism, and various totalitarian fallacies. All this was shattered by the war...” — Preface to The Theatre of the Absurd, 1962
Characteristics of Absurdist Theatre

Language in an absurdist drama goes nowhere

One of the most important characteristics of this genre was its distrust of language as a means of communication. To the Absurdists, language had evolved into nothing more than meaningless exchanges. Words did not express the human experience. In the Theatre of the Absurd, language is an unreliable tool of communication. Playwrights of this genre would distort conventional speech, jargon and slogans to demonstrate that by going beyond everyday speech one can communicate in a more honest manner. In some examples of Absurdist drama, the dialogue resembles nothing more than gobbledygook whereas in others, it can contradict the actions occurring onstage.

Physical objects have a higher importance than language.

What actually happens goes beyond what is being said about it. The subtext has primary importance, over and above what is being said. The Theatre of the Absurd aims to communicate a totality of perception and had to transcend language.

In *Endgame*, think of the significance of Hamm’s stuffed dog and the flea. What do these objects bring to the play that words cannot?

Absurd drama subverts logic. It revels in the unexpected and logically impossible.

The plotline of an absurdist drama, if any exists, generally ends up where it started — nothing has been accomplished and characters are the same at the end of the play as they were at the start.

Characters have little to no individuality. Sometimes they even lack names and identification

In *Endgame*, the characters are all dependent on one another for survival.

Unlike conventional theatre where there is a known framework and fixed objectives, The Theatre of the Absurd defies logical syllogism and order.

Absurdist theatre keeps the spectator in suspense of what will happen next to better their understanding of what is happening

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The Essential Absurdist Reading List

*Ubu Roi* by Alfred Jarry
— A good starting point. To understand how Theatre of Absurd evolved, it is helpful to read one of the great influences.

*Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett
*Endgame* by Samuel Beckett
— *Waiting for Godot* deals with waiting, *Endgame* deals with leaving

*Rhinoceros* by Eugene Ionesco
*The Bald Soprano* by Eugene Ionesco
*The Balcony* by Jean Genet
— The play is set inside a bordello in a modern European city that is going through a revolution. When the city’s rulers are destroyed, the bordello’s patrons impersonate the city’s leaders.

*Tango* by Slawomir Mrozek
— A young man who has grown up in a valueless world stages a revolution to restore order.

*Le Ping Pong* by Arthur Adamov
— Two men waste their lives trying to build the perfect pinball machine.

*The Dumb Waiter* by Harold Pinter
— Two hired killers wait around for their next assignment.

*The Birthday Party* by Harold Pinter
— A young man seeks shelter from a hostile world and finds it in what he thinks is a safe house. Two visitors from his old life track him down.

*The Homecoming* by Harold Pinter
— A man takes his wife home to visit his dysfunctional family.

*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* by Tom Stoppard
— An absurd take on Hamlet from the points of view of two minor characters in Shakespeare’s Hamlet.

*Fuddy Meers* by David Lindsay –Abaire
— An amnesiac wakes up every morning a blank and her family must fill in the memories.

*The Marriage* by Witold Gombrowicz
— An example of drama demonstrating the shattered consciousness of post-war Europe.
Minimalism

A movement in design, art, literature and music or any design or style where the simplest and fewest elements are used to create the maximum effect. Minimalism developed in the 20th century after World War II.

Samuel Beckett originally wrote *Endgame* in French (*Fin de partie*). The English language has approximately five times more words than the French Language and Beckett preferred writing in French because he thought it was possible to write “without style” with a minimum of words to choose from. Samuel Beckett also did his own translations. The result is what director Geoff Elliott refers to as “hypercrafted” language. Even though there are few words, the words, punctuation, and syntax are very precise, exacting, and carefully chosen.

artists associated with the movement include:

**Visual Artists**
- Donald Judd
- John McCracken
- Agnes Martin
- Dan Flavin
- Robert Morris
- Anne Truit

**Musical Artists**
- Phillip Glass
- LaMonte Young
- Terry Riley
- Steve Reich

**Literary/Theatrical/Film Artists**
- Raymond Carver
- Samuel Beckett
- Robert Bresson
Beckett gives few details concerning costumes for *Endgame*. Given the state of the world of this play, Angela Calin began collecting images of tattered people who had fallen on hard times. The collection included individuals with mental and emotional problems who were living on the street. We also know through the dialogue that it is very cold, so these people would be bundled for warmth. Beckett’s characters do not have the ability to sufficiently bathe or otherwise take care of themselves physically, so the clothing needs to reflect a worn, distressed, layered feel. When you look at these folks you should almost imagine that you can smell them.
Jeanine and I began discussing the world of Beckett’s Endgame several months ago. First and foremost we wanted to follow Beckett’s lead in terms of his description of the set-2 windows upstage, a door to the right, a chair center, 2 trashcans left, and a picture hung backwards on the wall. His perspective is one of simplicity and minimalism. He makes it clear in this masterwork that these are people living in complete isolation. Theirs is a world in which some terrible catastrophe has destroyed all living things on the planet, and they are alone to await the end.

Jeanine began collecting pictures of burned out buildings, of concrete structures abandoned half-way through construction, of devastated, wet, crumbling structures. From there we began to envision a room that felt not only damp and smelly, but was claustrophobic. A room with no escape. This meant bringing the back wall of this room as far down stage as possible and curved toward the audience, giving an uneasy sense to the physical space.
Endgame: Key Words

Ardennes: region of forests, rolling hills and ridges between Belgium, France, and Luxembourg which was the site of three major battles during World Wars I and II

Ballockses: form the British slang “Ballocks” to make a mess of, to mess up

Biscuit: a British term for cookie

Bonbon: French term for a type of sweet, usually a candy covered in chocolate

Bonny: British term meaning beautiful and good

Crablouse: an insect that feeds on blood and lives in pubic hair; “crabs” plural

Crumpets: small round unsweetened British bread

Doggos: British slang for lying quietly out of sight

Engender: to produce offspring

“Flora! Pomona! Ceres!” Hamm’s line referring to the Roman goddesses of flowers, fruit trees, and agriculture

Fontanelles: vulnerable soft spots of an infant’s or animal’s head before the bony plates of the skull fuse together

Gaff: 1) stick with a hook or barbed spear 2) rough treatment or criticism 3) from the French, gaffe, an embarrassing mistake

Glass: a telescope

Heliometer: astronomical telescope used for measuring diameter of the sun and angles between heavenly bodies or between points on the moon

The Herring Fleet: 1) The title of an 1879 engraving by Gilbert Munger depicting ships on a river 2) The title of an 1921 essay by Robert Lynd from his book, The Pleasures of Ignorance:

“Flora! Pomona! Ceres!” Hamm’s reference to the Roman goddesses of flowers, fruit trees, and agriculture

“Mene, mene” Hamm’s reference to Aramaic “Numbered, numbered, weighted, divided” from the New Testament; essentially, “the writing on the wall” that signifies impending doom

“Our revels now are ended…” Hamm quotes Prospero from Shakespeare’s The Tempest, Act 4 Scene 1

Progenitor: ancestor or parent from which a plant, animal, or person is descended

Pap: 1) A teat or nipple, as for a baby’s bottle 2) infant formula 3) material lacking real value or substance

Sedan: a village in the Ardennes with a fortified castle where the Germans invaded France in 1940

Shanks: a bicycle part

Spratt’s medium: a kind of dog biscuit

Stancher: an item used to stanch/stop the flow of blood from a wound

Sugarplum: a candy with a hardened outer layer of sugar typically made with dried fruit, nuts, and spices

Tandem: a tandem bicycle is a bicycle built for two riders

Toque: a hat with a narrow brim or none at all; also the hat of a professional chef

Turkish Delight: a gel like candy made from sugar, flour, sometimes including dates, pistachios, walnuts, rose or lemon flavor

Whelped: born like a dog, wolf, lion or other carnivorous mammal
1. *Endgame* takes place in a single room. How does this influence the production of the play for a stage? Take the author into account. Why did Beckett create this setting? Does the setting support the context of the play? Cite an example of the text and analyze the quote you selected. How does the setting influence the play? Does the play have the same impact on stage?
   a. (Writing 9: draw evidence from text to support argument)

2. Why do you think the play is entitled *Endgame*? Various other literary and entertainment works have also used the title *Endgame*, why do you think that is? What is the significance of “endgame”? What does “endgame” mean to you? Research other uses of “endgame” and write a short one page paper about what “endgame” means or represents.
   a. (Writing 1: write an essay with a thesis statement)
   b. (Writing 9: draw evidence from text to support argument)

3. There are a significant number of pauses in *Endgame*. What do these pauses signify? How do they affect the play? Locate a pause in *Endgame* and analyze the scene. Is there a difference in reading the pause in the play versus seeing the production? Do these pauses occur in real life? Have a conversation with a friend and try to include a pause after every sentence. Did it seem normal to you? With your friend, discuss how these pauses affected the conversation.
   a. (Writing 9: draw evidence from text to support argument)

4. How do you interpret the end of the play? Analyze the last scene. What literally happens? What can you interpret from it? Cite quotes from the text to support your analysis
   a. (Reading 1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis)
   b. (Writing 9: draw evidence from text to support argument)

5. After 2012, many people are intrigued by the idea of the apocalypse and the end of the world. Think of recent movies, television shows, and novels. *Endgame* takes place after an unnamed disaster. Why do you think people are so fascinated with the idea of the apocalypse? Think of another work that sets itself after a disaster. Who has survived and why? Compare the story to *Endgame*. What is similar and what is different? What is the significance of Beckett allowing the disaster to remain unknown? What do you think the disaster is that leads to *Endgame*? Did the characters’ disabilities result from the disaster?
   a. (Reading 9: Analyze a modern work of fiction and how it draws on themes, events, from traditional stories)
Endgame: Resource Guide

BOOKS


ARTICLES

• Calder, John “Review: The Royal Court Theatre, London: Beckett’s 70th birthday season”
• Review of: *Endgame* Dir. by Donald McWhinnie. First performance, 6 May 1976.)
• Horowitz, Evan. “‘Endgame’: Beginning to End.” *Journal of Modern Literature* 27.4 (2004): 121-128. JSTOR. Web

WEBITES

• The Beckett Circle: www.beckettcircle.org/
• Samuel Beckett Resources and Links: www.samuel-beckett.net/

FILM

• Youtube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=NsDc8R4rEWY
Today, movies and television take audiences away from what was once the number one form of amusement: going to the theatre. But attending a live theatrical performance is still one of the most thrilling and active forms of entertainment.

In a theatre, observers are catapulted into the action, especially at an intimate venue like A Noise Within, whose thrust stage reaches out into the audience and whose actors can see, hear, and feel the response of the crowd.

Although playhouses in the past could sometimes be rowdy, participating in the performance by giving respect and attention to the actors is the most appropriate behavior at a theatrical performance today. Shouting out (or even whispering) can be heard throughout the auditorium, as can rustling paper or ringing phones.

After A Noise Within’s performance of Endgame, you will have the opportunity to discuss the play’s content and style with the performing artists and directors. You may wish to remind students to observe the performance carefully or to compile questions ahead of time so they are prepared to participate in the discussion.

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**Key Theatrical Terms**

**blocking:** The instructions a director gives his actors that tell them how and where to move in relation to each other or to the set in a particular scene.

**character:** The personality or part portrayed by an actor on stage.

**conflict:** The opposition of people or forces which causes the play’s rising action.

**dramatic irony:** A dramatic technique used by a writer in which a character is unaware of something the audience knows.

**genre:** Literally, “kind” or “type.” In literary terms, genre refers to the main types of literary form, principally comedy and tragedy. It can also refer to forms that are more specific to a given historical era, such as the revenge tragedy, or to more specific sub-genres of tragedy and comedy such as the comedy of manners, farce or social drama.

**motivation:** The situation or mood which initiates an action. Actors often look for their “motivation” when they try to dissect how a character thinks or acts.

**pros:** Items carried on stage by an actor to represent objects mentioned in or implied by the script. Sometimes the props are actual, sometimes they are manufactured in the theatre shop.

**proscenium stage:** There is usually a front curtain on a proscenium stage. The audience views the play from the front through a “frame” called the proscenium arch. In this scenario, all audience members have the same view of the actors.

**set:** The physical world created on stage in which the action of the play takes place.

**setting:** The environment in which a play takes place. It may include the historical period as well as the physical space.

**stage areas:** The stage is divided into areas to help the director to note where action will take place. Upstage is the area furthest from the audience. Downstage is the area closest to the audience. Center stage defines the middle of the playing space. Stage left is the actor’s left as he faces the audience. Stage right is the actor’s right as he faces the audience.

**theme:** The overarching message or main idea of a literary or dramatic work. A recurring idea in a play or story.

**thrust stage:** A stage that juts out into the audience seating area so that patrons are seated on three sides. In this scenario, audience members see the play from varying viewpoints. A Noise Within features a thrust stage.
About A Noise Within

A NOISE WITHIN’S MISSION is to produce great works of world drama and to foster appreciation of history’s greatest plays and playwrights through comprehensive educational programs. ANW is the only theatre in Southern California and one of only a handful in North America to exclusively produce year-round classical dramatic literature—from master works by Euripides, Moliere and Shakespeare, to modern classics by Arthur Miller, Henrik Ibsen and Samuel Beckett—in rotating repertory with a company of classically trained resident artists.

The company was formed in 1991. All of A Noise Within’s Resident Artists have been classically trained, and many hold Master of Fine Arts degrees from some of the nation’s most respected institutions.

In its 21 year history, A Noise Within has garnered over 500 awards and commendations, including the Los Angeles Drama Critics’ Circle’s revered Polly Warfield Award for Excellence and the coveted Margaret Hartford Award for Sustained Excellence.

More than 27,000 individuals attend productions at A Noise Within annually. In addition, the theatre draws over 10,000 student participants to its arts education program, Classics Live! Students benefit from in-classroom workshops, conservatory training, subsidized tickets to matinee and evening performances, post-performance discussions with artists, and free standards-based Study Guides.

A Noise Within’s vision is to become a national leader in the production of classical theatre, creating an environment that continues to attract the finest classical theatre artists, educates, and inspires audiences of all ages, and trains the leading classical theatre artists of tomorrow.

Study Guides

A Noise Within creates study guides in alignment with core reading, listening, speaking, and performing arts standards to help educators prepare their students for their visit to our theatre. Study guides are available at no extra cost to download through our website: www.anoisewithin.org. The information and activities outlined in these guides are designed to work in compliance with the California VAPA standards, The Common Core, and 21st Century Learning Skills.

Study guides include background information on the plays and playwrights, historical context, textual analysis, in-depth discussion of A Noise Within’s artistic interpretation of the work, statements from directors and designers, as well as discussion points and suggested classroom activities. Guides from past seasons are also available to download from the website.