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Name of the Teacher: Dr. Anand Singh

Department: English

Email ID: anand16gdc@gmail.com

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## **Theatre of the Absurd**

The theatre of absurd as a distinct genre of drama emerged after the catastrophic effects of two world wars. The word absurd suggests that it is a drama that depicts the meaninglessness of the post-world war II era. It is based on the philosophy of existentialist as proposed by Albert Camus and others philosophers of that era. This philosophy stresses on the fact that the post-world war world is like an alien world where a man is alone, devoid of any kind of help either spiritual or social. The post-world war man has no faith, no love, no religion, no God, no social help. Post-world war man is insecure. He fears that at any moment his life would end by some bomb attack, enemy country infiltration, or by some anti-social agents. He has no aim, no purpose. His life is meaningless, insecure and bogus. He is living his life as a helpless animal.

The term theatre of the absurd is coined by critic Martin Esslin in his essay "Theatre of the Absurd". This genre drew its inspiration from french philosopher Albert Camus' essay "Myth of Sisyphus". This essay describes the situation of a human being in the post-world war as meaningless. It describes the fear and anxiety faced by modern man.

Martin Esslin wrote: "The Theatre of the Absurd attacks the comfortable certainties of religious or political orthodoxy. It aims to shock its audience out of complacency, to bring it face to face with the harsh facts of the human situation as these writers see it. But the challenge behind this message is anything but one of despair. It is a challenge to accept the human condition as it is, in all its mystery and absurdity, and to bear it with dignity, nobly, responsibly; precisely because there are no easy

solutions to the mysteries of existence, because ultimately man is alone in a meaningless world. The shedding of easy solutions, of comforting illusions, may be painful, but it leaves behind it a sense of freedom and relief. And that is why, in the last resort, the Theatre of the Absurd does not provoke tears of despair but the laughter of liberation". Martin Esslin further explains absurdist drama as: "Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose... Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless".

"Waiting for Godot" by Samuel Beckett is regarded as a model absurdist drama. It is a tragic-comedy published in 1952. In this play Vladimir and Estragon waits for a character named Godot. Lucky and Pozzo are another set of characters. The characters in this play suffers from existential problem. They have no purpose, they do not know what to do. Their lives are miserable and meaningless. The dialogue- "nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful". It explains the hollowness of post-world war man. This play lacks a meaning, coherence and a well-organized structure. At first literary critics regard this genre as meaningless but slowly and steadily it gained popularity as it expressed the spirit of the post-world war era.

Some other examples are "The Birthday Party" by Harold Pinter. Jean-Paul Sartre's "No Exit" (1944). "The Firebugs" by Max Frisch (1953), "The Zoo Story" by Edward Albee (1958) etc.