

# ARMS AND THE MAN

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MAPLE  
CLASSICS

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**Modern Drama** is essentially a drama of ideas rather than action. The stage is used by dramatists to give expression to certain ideas which they want to spread in society. Modern Drama dealing with the problems of life has become far more intelligent than ever it was in the history of drama before the present age.

Modern theater is mostly a drama of thoughts as opposed to action. Dramatists utilize the theatre to communicate particular concepts that they aim to extend across society. Modern drama dealing with contemporary issues has grown significantly more intellectual than it has ever been before in the history of play.

### **An Introduction to Modern Drama**

The drama which had suffered a steep decline during the Victorian Age was revived with great force at the late 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century and the course of six decades has witnessed many trends and currents in the 20th-century drama.

The drama written and performed in the 20th century is by any standards a major achievement. There has been much innovation and experiment and this has been related to the growth and crisis of civilization. The new movements in the 20th century were influenced by liberty, equality and fraternity and the challenging attitude in Art and Life. There was an array of complex and confusing trends. This century witnessed the final culmination(top) of the stage's commercialism and this was evident in the rise of the repertory playhouses and the associated movements. A new style of acting emerged: "less polished, less virtuoso. But stronger, more direct and individualistic, more related to behavior outside the theatre.

## Features of Modern Drama

1. Modern drama is rational, philosophical and psychological. Faith has been replaced by cause and effect as well as reason as war has shattered the beliefs of people in God and fate. There is focus on man's psychological state.
2. The modern protagonist fights against poverty, exploitation and class distinction. The real problems of life are adopted in modern theatre.
3. Social, religious, political and economic themes are presented in modern drama. Feminism is another new theme tackled by modern dramatists.
4. The protagonist of the play is a common man, he is not a king or a prince or a nobleman as in classical drama. Heroism is almost absent in modern drama.
5. Modern drama is objective drama. It is based on realism.

## The Drama of Ideas

The drama of ideas is that kind of drama that provokes the intellectuals of the audience, rather their emotions. Indeed any kind of drama carries a certain idea to its audience, but what distinguishes the drama of ideas is that the actions or the incidents inside the play is not of primal importance, what counts is the discussion and the ideas the dramatist wants to convey to his audience. **Ibsen, Shaw**, Galsworthy and Granville Barker were the chief exponents of this realistic drama of ideas. Since it is all about ideas, then we must know what ideas influenced the playwrights of the modern age, they adopted from Charles Darwin and other scientists and philosophers a worldview that insisted on the shaping power of the environment, inheritance, and other material circumstances. Shaw's main concern was to reform society through staging. To Shaw drama was a medium for articulating his own ideas and philosophy; he wanted to cast his ideas through discussions.

## There are some Characteristics in Modern Drama:

**1-Realism**, in theater, was meant to be a direct observation of human behavior. It began as a way to make theater more useful to society, a way to hold a mirror up to society. Because of this thrust towards the “real” playwrights started using more contemporary settings, backgrounds and characters. Where plays in the past had, for the most part, used mythological or stereotypical characters, now they involved the lower class, the poor, the rich; they involved all genders, classes and races. One of the main contributors to this style was Henrik.

**2-Naturalism**: It gives the illusion of real life presented on stage. The action evolves through the situations and personalities of the characters. It was a movement in late 19th-century drama that aimed to replace the artificial romantic style with accurate representations of ordinary people in believable situations. Naturalism refers to theatre that tries to create a perfect illusion of reality by use of a range of dramatic and theatrical strategies.

**3- Absurdism** : An **absurdity** is a thing that is extremely unreasonable, so as to be foolish or not taken seriously, or the state of being so. It derives from the Latin *absurdum* meaning "out of tune", hence irrational. Absurdity is contrasted with seriousness in reasoning. In general usage, absurdity may be synonymous with ridiculousness and nonsense. In specialized usage, absurdity is related to extremes in bad reasoning or pointlessness in reasoning; ridiculousness is related to extremes of incongruous juxtaposition (act of placing side by side, laughter, and ridicule; and nonsense is related to a lack of meaningfulness. Absurdism is a concept in philosophy related to the notion of absurdity. Absurdism implies a tragic tone and feelings of frustration that arise out of the contradiction between the human quest for the meaning of life and its inaccessibility.

Many people believe that the most fundamental philosophical problem is this: what is the meaning of existence? That's a question that **Albert Camus** dug into in his novels, plays, and essays. His answer was perhaps a little depressing. He thought that life had no meaning, that nothing exists that could ever be a source of meaning, and hence there is something deeply absurd about the human quest to find meaning.

Appropriately, then, his philosophical view was called (existentialist) absurdism. the question that Camus asks in his famous work, *The Myth of Sisyphus*. He says, "There is only one really serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide." He was haunted by this

question of whether suicide could be the only rational response to the absurdity of life. The

only rational conclusion about God's existence could only make life more absurd, not less.

## **Theatre of the Absurd**

The Theatre of the Absurd began as a protest against man's existence and developed into a significant style and form of theatre. As an effort to make man aware of his ultimate conditions and realities of life, dramatists have reflected their Anguished vision of the universe. By expressing life as meaningless, unrealistic and illogical, absurdist's hope to shock man out of an existence that has become trite هفات. Therefore, the Theatre of the Absurd is intent on making it's audience aware of man's precarious (unsteady) position in the universe by forcing the observer to make sense out of what appears to be senseless. The poet's vision of the world then, is to communicate a total sense of being and present a truer picture of reality itself, through dialogue and action. Through the influences of Samuel Beckett and others Theatre of the Absurd has developed as a style throughout Europe and has successfully continued in America with the help of Edward Albee and others.

Theatre of the Absurd is an expression, which lends itself to interpretation. Although commonly used to mean ridiculous, the word absurd is not used in this connotation when referring to it as a style of theatre. Rather “out of harmony”, its original meaning, more correctly identifies Theatre of the Absurd; “incongruous, unreasonable, illogical.”

### **Some writers of Modern Drama:**

**Ionesco** defines the term absurd as being "...devoid of purpose...Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions ~~become senseless, absurd, useless~~" (Esslin 5).

**Albert Camus**, on the other hand, felt that this theatrical style was a form of Revolt. He called it a "metaphysical rebellion... the movement by which man protests against his conditions and against the whole creation" (Brustein 30).

**Robert Brustein** furthers (promptes) this idea of revolt, calling it an existential revolt. Brustein explains that dramatists of the Theatre of the Absurd examine the metaphysical life of man through protest and teaches man to find comfort and happiness or if nothing more, strength and courage . The drama of existential revolt, Theatre of the Absurd, is ultimately the cry of anguish over the insufferable state of being human. Existence itself becomes the source of man's rebellion, explains Brustein .

Through action, dialogue and complex characters, dramatists are able to communicate a feeling of deadness and senselessness, which represents the Theatre of the Absurd. These themes form a pattern of poetic images throughout the action. For example, when two characters Wait for Godot in Beckett's Waiting for Godot, they are not necessarily waiting for Godot, but for something to happen. This idea then that nothing happens, represents the image of man's life. Therefore, nothing happens in man's existence .

The action is not usually dramatic, nor is it telling a story, communicating a moral or presenting a debate of issues. It is rather, a presentation of a character's situation than events. It is to present a sense of being. The dialogue is based solely on images, not speech. Through the dialogue's images, anguish is heightened by timeless infinity as in Waiting for Godot .

## **Origins of Absurd Theatre:**

The origins of the Theatre of the Absurd are rooted in the avant-garde (A group of extremists in any field) experiments in art of the 1920s and 1930s. At the same time, it was undoubtedly strongly influenced by the traumatic experience of the horrors of the Second World War, which showed the total impermanence of any values, shook the validity of any conventions and highlighted the precariousness of human life and its fundamental meaninglessness and arbitrariness. The trauma of living from 1945 under threat of nuclear annihilation also seems to have been an important factor in the rise of the new theatre.

## **Characteristics of the absurd theatre:**

1. Absurdist plays suspend the classical Aristotelian categories of unity (time, place, action): The places are not clearly defined – they appear imaginary and exchangeable.
2. The plot is absurdly expansive or cyclical. This can be illustrated by the excessive repetition of words, sentences and even situations; as well as the seemingly unstructured, aimless dialogues. The world on stage is turned into a permanent vicious circle. *Waiting for Godot*, for example, ends the same way it began. Plot then appears purposeless, presents confusing situations and lacks logical development.
3. The dynamics of action is replaced by statics, repetition and routine. Time is turned into a permanent, fixed and durable state made up of waiting and existing.

4. There is no dramatic conflict.

5. There are recurring situations rather than events.

6. characters appear as anonymous and hardly to grasp figures, completely unmotivated. There is no character development. Absurd plays depict characters as anti-heroes who are pathetic and guilty.

7. Language: characters do talk but nonsense with repetitive words. Language becomes a vehicle for passing time, expressing daily routines and meaningless babbling; a vehicle for anything but not communication.

### **Two important factors were responsible for the revival of drama in 1890's:**

The revival of drama in the 1890s was significantly influenced by two key factors: the impact of Henrik Ibsen and the emergence of a new generation of playwrights and theatrical movements.

#### **1-Influence of Henrik Ibsen:**

Henrik Ibsen, a Norwegian playwright, played a crucial role in transforming the landscape of modern drama. His works, which began to be translated and performed in England around 1888, introduced a new style of realism that focused on contemporary issues and the complexities of human relationships. Ibsen's plays often challenged societal norms and conventions, addressing themes such as gender roles, morality, and individualism. This shift towards realism marked a departure from the melodramatic and romantic styles that had dominated earlier theatrical productions. Ibsen's influence encouraged playwrights to explore serious subjects and to depict everyday life with greater authenticity.

## 2-Emergence of New Playwrights and Movements:

Alongside Ibsen's influence, the 1890s saw the rise of a new generation of playwrights, including George Bernard Shaw, Harley Granville Barker, and John Galsworthy. These writers embraced Ibsen's realist techniques and expanded upon them, creating works that reflected the social and political issues of their time. Shaw, in particular, became a leading figure in the New Drama movement, advocating for a theatre that was intellectually engaging and socially relevant. The establishment of the Irish Literary Theatre, which later became the Abbey Theatre, further exemplified this revival by focusing on Irish themes and fostering a national identity through drama.

In summary, the revival of drama in the 1890s was driven by Ibsen's groundbreaking contributions to realism and the emergence of a new wave of playwrights who sought to address contemporary social issues, ultimately reshaping the theatrical landscape.

# Arms and the Man

## Key-Facts

**Genre** \*Comedy of manners; social satire

**Language** English

**Time And Place Written** London; 1893

**Date Of First Performance** 1894 (London)

**Narrator** Play does not have a narrator, but there are scene descriptions and stage in addition to the dialogue.= **the stage description of Act III to be nothing more than a bookshelf.**

**Point Of View** The play has no “point of view” as in fiction. The audience sees all characters equally and externally.

**Tone** Social critique

**Tense** Present

**Setting (Time)** 1885-6

**Setting (Place)** Bulgaria; the Petkoff estate

**Protagonist** Raina= **and her true antagonist is the reality of war and love.**

**Major Conflict** Catherine and Raina worry that Sergius and Petkoff will realize that they (hide) harbored Bluntschli in their home in secret during the war.

**Rising Action** Bluntschli arrives back at the Petkoff estate in Act Two, to return Petkoff's coat.

**Climax** Bluntschli reveals his love for Raina, Raina her love for Bluntschli; and Louka and Sergius admit to their affair.

**Falling Action** Bluntschli makes a formal offer of marriage to Raina, who accepts, and Sergius offers marriage to Louka, who also accepts (after goading him into doing it).

**Themes** Disillusionment with war; the complexity of romantic love; the arbitrary nature of social status

**Motifs** Ill-timed entry; romantic affairs; the soul of a servant

**Symbols** Petkoff's coat; chocolate creams; the library

**Foreshadowing** In Act Two, Sergius and Petkoff discuss hearing a story about a man whom Bulgarian noblewomen hid in their own home, with their husbands and families away at war. Louka states that she knows secrets about the Petkoffs, and also will do whatever she can to elevate her social status.

Historical Background of the Play The Balkans is a name given to the region which includes modern-day Greece, Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania. During the 19th century, after over 500 years of ruling this southeastern quadrant of Europe, (as well as North Africa, Spain and much of the Middle East), the once powerful Ottoman (Turkish) Empire was weakening. The great powers of Europe – Russia, Germany, Austria – were more than willing to divide up any spoils that would result from a Turkish defeat. The question was, of course, which of these powers would reap the largest benefits. The Balkans has an exceedingly complex history, peopled by a wide variety of religious, ethnic and linguistic groups scattered through this mountainous territory in a seemingly random manner. Dividing up the region into countries during the latter part of the nineteenth century therefore became contentious and has resulted in border disputes, civil wars and ethnic massacres even to this day

Balkans are :Blue, red , and yellow color.



### Arms and the Man

Arms and the Man is set during the very brief Serbo-Bulgarian war of November, 1885. In a dispute between the two neighbouring Balkan countries, each of whom felt the other had expansionist designs, Serbia was being backed by the (namsa)Austro-Hungarian Empire and Bulgaria was being backed by the Russian Empire. Each of the larger powers was supporting the quarreling countries with officers and supplies. The Swiss provided a large number of mercenaries, (such as Captain Bluntschli) who profited by, but cared nothing for, the outcome of the war. Shortly after Serbia declared war in November 1885 and invaded, Russia called back her officers and Bulgaria was left to fend for herself. In spite of this setback, the Bulgarians were victorious in the Battle of Slivnitsa on Nov. 19th.

# Characters

## 1. Catherine Petkoff

Catherine Petkoff, the mother of Raina and wife of Major Petkoff. The Petkoffs are an upper-class Bulgarian family. As the play opens, Catherine rushes into Raina's bedroom in the late evening to tell her the news that Raina's fiancé, Sergius Saranoff, led a victory in battle in the Russian-Austrian War, with the Bulgarians on the side of the Russians. Both women are thrilled, and both are very romantic in their attitudes.

## 2. Raina Petkoff

Raina Petkoff, a twenty-three-year-old who idealistically believes herself to be in love with Sergius, to whom she is engaged. As the play develops, a series of shocks and learning experiences, such as seeing Sergius with his arm around Louka, move her away from idealism and toward realism.

**3. Louka Louka**, a servant in the household who is engaged to another servant, Nicola. She comes in to tell Catherine and Raina that the windows and shutters are to be closed and fastened because the enemy is being chased through the town by Bulgarian soldiers. Catherine tells Raina to close them and leave them closed, then leaves to take care of the rest of the household; Raina, however, prefers the windows open, so Louka closes them in such a way that Raina can open them and then leaves.

## 4. Captain Bluntschli

Captain Bluntschli, a Swiss mercenary soldier of about thirty-five years. He is running away after his company lost the battle to Sergius. His father owns a chain of hotels in Switzerland. Although Bluntschli is in many ways a realist, his choice of the life of a soldier, a choice not forced upon him, is unrealistic. He startles Raina when she hears him climbing up to her balcony and coming into her room after she had blown out her candle in fright; he orders her not to expose him. She goes back and forth between treating him as an enemy and feeling sorry for him. When a Russian officer arrives searching for him, she hides and protects him, and eventually he falls asleep in her bed. Though shocked, Catherine and Raina finally allow him to sleep, and presumably he leaves safely the next morning.

**5. Nicola Nicola**, a servant engaged to Louka. They have a conversation at the beginning of act 2, as they do again later, and it becomes clear that they will almost surely never marry. Louka bitterly resents being a servant, but Nicola respects his role as a servant and respects the family, viewing them as a source of patronage when he saves enough money to open a shop.

**6. Major Paul Petkoff** , a commander of the Bulgarian army who is about fifty years old. He arrives home in March, 1886, immediately after the servants' conversation.

### **7. Major Sergius Saranoff**

Major Sergius Saranoff, who arrives soon after Petkoff has greeted his servants and his wife in the garden. Raina makes a dramatic entrance, and when the others leave them, Sergius and Raina express their highly romantic (and false) idea of love for each other. When Raina returns to the house, Sergius attempts to make love to Louka. Bluntschli arrives to return Petkoff's coat, which Raina had lent him. During a series of comical interludes, it is revealed that Sergius' "heroism" was a stupid mistake that turned out luckily. It turns out that Sergius will marry Louka and that Bluntschli will marry Raina (with the approval of her parents, once they learn of his wealth); both couples feel genuine love, not false romanticism.

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This play is talking about the Serb- Bulgarian war occurred in 1885 ( But the play itself has written after that year ), therefore, this play sorted as literary work of " Modernism".

### **The significance of the title of Arms and the Man**

The title of a literary work adumbrates the theme of it. Bernard Shaw's Arms and the Man was at first called Alps and Balkans, but one place is as good as another, for the play concerns human attitudes. The title which replaced it was taken from the first line of Dryden's translation of Virgil's Aeneid (Arms and the Man I sing"). The Aeneid which begins with the Latin phrase "Arma virumque Cano" and the opening lines in Dryden's translation of Virgil's Aeneid run as follows:"Arms and the Man, I sing who forced by fate And haughty Juno's unrelenting hate"Virgil's phrase as understood from Dryden's translation praises "the soldier and weapons of war". It is a heroic expression that brings to the mind the stir and thrill of war, and heroic exploits of great warriors. But in Arms and the Man Shaw reverses the process and changes the

significance of the phrase. The technical originality of the play is that it "is built not on pathos, but bathos" (Chesterton) and the main intention of the dramatist is to create comic and not tragic effects. This very technical peculiarity, bathos or anti-climax is indicated by the title of the play itself.

The pathos in *Arms and the Man* indicates a comic-ironic treatment of the theme of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Instead of glorifying war and heroism like Virgil, Shaw expresses the romantic glamour attached to war and the profession of a soldier. Though the play opens against a background of ideal heroism it ends in total disillusionment of all.

The play clearly manifests in a comical, ironical manner that war is not a glorious affair. Here the two themes of war and marriage are really interwoven, for Shaw believed that while war is evil and stupid and marriage desirable and good, both had become wrapped in romantic illusions which led to disastrous wars and also to unhappy marriages. When the play opens we find Raina, the heroine, rejoicing at the news of the victorious cavalry charge led by her betrothed Major Sergius Saranoff.

Raina rejoices because she can now believe that "the world is really a glorious world for women who can see its glory and men who can act into romance. Moreover, this victory has proved for Raina that all her ideals of patriotism, honour and selfless love real after all. This is a romantic girl's romantic view of life, revealed at the very beginning of the play.

## Summary: Act One, Beginning of play to Bluntschli's entry

The play begins in a small town “near the Dragoman Pass” in Bulgaria, in the bedroom of a young woman named Raina Petkoff. It's November 1885, and a war is on between the Bulgarian troops with their Russian allies, and the combined Serbian forces. The Serbian forces include many soldiers hired from other nations. The scene description, in italics, sets a pattern for the rest of the play. Although there is no official narrator and the scene descriptions are in essence only for the eyes of the company putting on the play, they contain a significant amount of detail not perceptible to a viewing audience. Only a reader knows these details. This includes, for example, notes on the mental states of some of the characters. The notes describe Rainia's room's décor as lavish, if somewhat kitschy.. There are chocolate cream candies visible on a dresser.

Raina gazes out her open window, and her mother, Catherine Petkoff, enters, telling Raina to close the windows because it's cold outside. Catherine is excited and delivers news that the Bulgarian-Russian army has won a great battle at Slivnitsa, against the Serbians and their allies. Catherine also states that a man named Sergius is responsible for leading the cavalry in the victory. Raina is overjoyed and relieved on hearing this. Raina admits to Catherine that, in Raina's lonelier moments, she has doubted whether the Bulgarians can compare in cultivation and elegance to the Russians. Raina has also wondered whether men in battle really are as heroic as she has read about in the works of Pushkin and Byron. Catherine tells Raina she should be ashamed to have doubted the Bulgarians, and Sergius in particular.

Louka, their maid, enters, and says that all windows and doors in the house should be closed and locked because there are fleeing Serbians in the area, and they might try to hide in Bulgarian houses. Catherine leaves the room to make sure the house is safe and in order. When Catherine is gone, Louka privately tells Raina that she can push open one of the shutters against Catherine's wishes to continue listening to the battle, as one shutter does not bolt properly. Raina scolds Louka aloud for contradicting Catherine's advice. Louka leaves, and Raina lies awake listening to the gunfire approach the house. At first Raina finds this exciting, but soon realizes

that the scattered Serbian army is very close by. She hears the shutters rattle, and in a moment a man strikes a match in the room, telling Raina to be quiet or he'll shoot her.

"Arms and the Man" is a play by George Bernard Shaw, known for its satirical take on the romanticization of war and the absurdities of military life. Shaw uses a combination of wit, irony, and satire to highlight the disconnect between the glorified image of war and its grim reality. Here are a few key aspects of absurdity in the play:

1. **Romantic vs. Realistic Views of War**: The play contrasts the romanticized view of war, as held by characters like Raina Petkoff, with the grim reality as depicted through the character of Captain Bluntschli. Raina initially sees war as a noble adventure, but Bluntschli's pragmatic and disillusioned perspective exposes the absurdity of this idealization.

2. **Character Contrasts**: The characters often embody contradictory traits that emphasize the absurdity of their situations. For example, Bluntschli is a professional soldier who prefers to carry chocolates instead of ammunition, reflecting the absurdity of war's practicalities. In contrast, Raina's father, Major Petkoff, is pompous and deluded about his own bravery and importance, which serves to mock the heroic self-image often associated with military figures.

3. **Situational Irony**: The play is rich in situational irony, where the outcomes are opposite to what is expected. For instance, the supposedly heroic war stories and grand narratives are undermined by the mundane and trivial details of the characters' real experiences. This highlights the absurdity of the grandiose narratives surrounding war.

4. **Mockery of Military Protocol**: Shaw pokes fun at military customs and protocols, showcasing their absurdity when they are placed under scrutiny. The play's portrayal of the absurd bureaucratic and hierarchical structures within the military adds to the comedy and critique of the institution.

5. **\*\*Contradictory Desires and Behaviors\*\***: Characters often exhibit contradictory desires and behaviors, which adds to the play's absurdity. For example, the contrast between Raina's idealistic view of war and her eventual realization reflects the absurdity of the disconnect between perception and reality.

Through these elements, Shaw critiques the absurdities inherent in the romanticization of war and the irrational behaviors of those who perpetuate it. The play effectively uses humor and satire to reveal the often ludicrous nature of these attitudes and practices.

6. **The Courageous Coward**: Shaw challenges traditional notions of heroism by presenting Bluntschli as a cowardly character who ultimately proves to be brave and resourceful. This challenges the idea that bravery is solely defined by acts of aggression in war, highlighting the importance of intelligence and practical thinking.

7. **The Power of Language and Wit**: Shaw's use of witty dialogue and wordplay is a key aspect of the story. The characters engage in sharp and clever repartee, emphasizing the power of language. This is particularly evident in the scenes between Raina and Bluntschli, where their verbal sparring showcases the importance of wit and intelligence over physical prowess.

### **Quote 1**

**“You see, sleep or no sleep, hunger or no hunger, tired or not tired, you can always do a thing when you know it must be done. Well, that pipe must be got down...”**

Bluntschli speaks this in Act One, in conversation with Raina when hiding in her room. The quote indicates his thought processes as a person and as a soldier. After all, Bluntschli is a mercenary. He fights as a Swiss with the Serbians because they have paid him to do so, because it is his occupation. This means that the war does not seem to touch the deepest part of him. He's not invested in it as an outcome of good against evil. But he is invested in it as a man doing his job, and for whom that kind of work is important. Thus, when Raina says that he must leave her room, he knows what a soldier must do is obey a woman in her social position.

He seems to recognize that as a soldier, his life is dominated by a desire for food and a desire for sleep. And in this instance, he has satisfied at least part of that, by eating the chocolate creams that Raina has given him. But he is not yet willing to abandon his desire for sleep, because he has gone so long without it, and because his very ability to reason seems to be slipping away. Yet, again, he is willing to toss all this to the side in order to do what an obedient man of honor would do, which is to leave the room of a woman who is asking him to do so.

All these opposing forces are at play in Bluntschli's decision-making. He has a desire to preserve his life, and also a desire to do what Raina asks. He has an obedience to principle as a "good" soldier, and also an obedience to whatever puts those principles into action, which is the overwhelming fear any soldier has of injury or death. Bluntschli demonstrates a kind of rational self-mastery that will only be overturned by Raina's willingness to let him nap for part of the evening in her room.

**"I've no ammunition. What use are cartridges in battle? I always carry chocolate instead".**

Captain Bluntschli upends many of Raina's and the audience's assumptions about war. Instead of focusing on the ability to harm enemy soldiers, the Swiss mercenary focuses on the ability to survive, knowing that starvation is a very real and painful possibility in extended battles. The audience is later informed that, due to a logistical error, the cartridges Bluntschli was issued were of the wrong size. In this light, Bluntschli's choice to carry chocolate rations is even more logical. The Captain's decision reveals that he is unconcerned with traditional notions of bravery or machismo, embracing efficiency and pragmatism instead of romantic ideals. Raina misunderstands the meaning of Bluntschli's choice, assuming the chocolate is a luxurious sweet and not the gritty, brittle field rations it actually is.

### **Symbols: Petkoff's coat**

Catherine and Raina lend Bluntschli Major Petkoff's coat to escape the estate in the fall, under cover of darkness. The coat is a symbol of the various instances of deception around which the novel unfolds. Bluntschli brings the coat back to the Petkoffs without realizing that Raina has left an inscribed picture of herself in its pocket, thus indicating to anyone who might see it that she loves Bluntschli despite being engaged to Sergius. The coat literally hides Raina's love for Bluntschli, and this love is only revealed once Raina's photograph is removed from the coat. Petkoff cannot find the coat in his closet until Nicola, on Catherine's urging, places the coat there after Bluntschli's return in an attempt to cover up the story. Major Petkoff is as sure the coat is not in his closet as he is that nothing is the matter between Raina, Bluntschli, and Sergius in that moment. When Nicola produces the coat, the turmoil between the characters is revealed, and Major Petkoff is just as shocked at both revelations.

### **Chocolate creams**

Raina keeps candies, including chocolate creams, in her bedroom. She appears not to like chocolate creams, as they're the only candies left in the box. But Bluntschli loves them especially, and famished as he is after the battle, he eats them greedily when Raina offers. From then on, she calls him "the chocolate cream soldier." Chocolate creams are a symbol of delicacy and high society, as well as a symbol of youthfulness. However, Bluntschli's willingness to stuff them in his pockets in place of ammunition indicates that they are also a symbol of maturity and knowledge. Bluntschli knows how difficult war is. He is a veteran, not a rookie. Thus the creams are over-determined in the play, meaning there is no single significance that can be placed on them. This is similar to how Raina and Bluntschli are neither paragons of total good nor total evil, but complex humans who behave practically as best they can.

### **The library**

For the Petkoffs, the library is a sign of cultivation and status in the family, which they perceive as rare among Bulgarians. The Petkoffs worry that the Bulgarians are not as refined as their Russian enemies, and Raina is quick to point out to Bluntschli that their library is perhaps the only one in the area. But as the Third Act's stage notes point out, the library is far from lavish. In fact, it's only a small room with dusty old volumes scattered on the shelves. The library symbolizes both the Petkoffs' preoccupation with what they see as fine taste, and the reality of the family that falls far short of this ideal.

### **Theme: Disillusionment with war**

The play discusses how war is made, how it is fought, and how parties sue for peace at the close of it. Indeed, the play's title is a direct quote from Virgil's *Aeneid*, the Roman epic that glorifies war. Shaw used this quote ironically, drawing attention to how war should not be seen as romantic.

The Serbo-Bulgarian War is not addressed directly in the text, although that is the historical template on which Shaw bases his production. Bluntschli is a Swiss mercenary who has hired himself to the Serb cause, along with soldiers from other nations. Sergius is supposed to represent the "heart" of the Bulgarian enterprise, with his gutsy charge at the start of the work demonstrating just how powerfully he wishes to defend his nation's honor. What becomes clear as the play progresses, however, is that war is simply a job for soldiers, and nothing more. Sergius is not the hero he is initially thought to be.

He romanticizes war to such an extent that he leads a foolish charge against the enemy, and only does so in order to climb the ranks for recognition. Bluntschli also destroys Raina's romantic idea of war and heroism when he proves that the best soldiers are often not identified as such on the outside. For Shaw, war is simply a way for men to occupy themselves, perhaps in redrawing small parts of the national borders, while others on the domestic front, who are predominantly women, shape many more aspects of life. Though Catherine and Raina are ostensibly dependent upon the outcome of the war, in dealing with Bluntschli they are also active participants in some of its intrigues. In harboring an enemy and ultimately marrying him, they add to the argument that war and its divisiveness can be meaningless.

### **The complexity of romantic love**

The interactions of characters are primarily driven by romantic love, or lack of it. Social conventions of love during Shaw's time period included public and formal courting, parental approval, and consideration of social status and wealth of each partner. However, the characters in this play defy the norms and each end up with a person that is best suited to them.

Characters slowly disabuse themselves of the features of romantic love they have most cherished all their lives, and realize that it is far more complex. For example, Raina does appear to love Sergius in the beginning of the play, but when she falls in love with Bluntschli, she realizes her love for Sergius was superficial. Perhaps Raina only felt this way because Sergius was lauded as a hero and because Catherine and Petkoff supported the union to maintain the family's social status. By contrast, Louka, though engaged to her fellow servant Nicola, does not appear to have ever been in love with him, and demonstrates that she is willing to work hard to marry into a higher rank. Romantic love does not seem to be a factor in her decisions. The beginnings of Louka's relationship with Sergius are illicit, and defy social norms of courtship. Bluntschli's introduction to Raina is also unconventional, as they meet secretly in her bedroom. And when they finally become engaged, Bluntschli, the pragmatic and calculating soldier, surprises everyone by revealing himself to be a lifelong romantic.

### **Summary: Beginning of Act Two to Sergius's first interaction with Louka**

The stage notes say that it is now March of 1886. The setting is still the Petkoffs' house in rural Bulgaria, but the action now takes place in an adjacent garden. Nicola, the male servant of the home, converses with Louka. Louka complains about her mistresses, Catherine and Raina, and Nicola scolds her for it. As he does it, he reveals that he and Louka are engaged. Nicola argues that he could never marry someone who didn't behave according to the rules of good service. Louka says she doesn't have the soul of a servant like Nicola does. Louka also says she knows many of the Petkoffs' secrets, and could use them against the family. Nicola counters that he also knows many secrets, but warns her that it is a servant's job never to betray these secrets to anyone. Nicola reveals to the audience that he one day hopes to purchase his freedom and open a shop in Sofia, the capital, at which Louka can work.

Nicola and Louka hear a man's voice outside the gate. The family's patriarch, Major Paul Petkoff, has returned from the war. The household scurries about to receive him. Nicola and Louka provide coffee, alcohol, and cigarettes. Catherine greets her husband excitedly but modestly. She is surprised and offended when Petkoff reveals that the Bulgarians and Russians have brokered a peace with the Serbians, instead of simply vanquishing them without conditions. In response, Petkoff says that it would have been nearly impossible to achieve total victory. Catherine tells her husband that, in his absence, they have installed an electric bell for the servants in the house, so no one needs to impolitely shout for help. Catherine finds the bell more civilized, but Petkoff thinks it unnecessary. They hear Sergius arriving, and before he enters the scene, Petkoff tells Catherine she'll need to get Sergius off Petkoff's back. Sergius is angling for a promotion that Petkoff fears will never come, because Sergius has no tactical military skill or intelligence. Sergius enters, and the stage directions describe him as the true image of his picture that Raina keeps in her bedroom. The directions say he looks like a genuine soldierly hero, but is cynical, moody, and thinks the world is unworthy of his ideals. Sergius announces, however, that he has resigned his commission in the Bulgarian army because he can no longer tolerate the cowardice of those in command. He repeats that although his cavalry charge was successful, the officers believed it was foolish and out of line with military etiquette. Petkoff tries to remain neutral in this, acknowledging that Sergius has been sorely treated but that being a soldier is a trade. Raina enters, greeting her father and Sergius excitedly but modestly.

Petkoff and Sergius reminisce about a soldier they met in battle near Peerot, who tricked them into trading two hundred worn-out horses for fifty strong men. This soldier was a Swiss hired by the Serbians. This immediately strikes Raina's and Catherine's interest, although they try not to let on that they are thinking of Bluntschli. Sergius and Petkoff tell a story they heard about this Swiss soldier being hidden by two Bulgarian women during his retreat. Catherine and Raina's fear is confirmed, that this man is the "chocolate cream soldier" they helped, and the women in the story are themselves. Sergius says the soldier escaped the master of the house's cloak.

Raina and Catherine try to pass off their dismay by scolding Petkoff and Sergius for telling an unseemly story. Sergius apologizes theatrically but Petkoff argues that women married to soldiers should be up to handling rough words. Catherine and Petkoff leave, and Sergius and Raina are alone for the first time in the play. Raina says that she could never remain mad at Sergius, and that she loves him. Sergius says the same to Raina, and she leaves the scene briefly, at which point Sergius turns his attention to Louka and begins flirting with her.

#### Quote 2.CH2/

**“You have the soul of a servant, Nicola.” “Yes, that’s the secret of success in service.”**

These quotes take place between Nicola and Louka in Act Two. They seem to understand the terms of their debate, but it is their underlying attitudes toward those terms that dictate their behavior. Nicola can, fundamentally, accept the task of a servant. It is the office into which he was born, and he believes that the way best to behave nobly is to accept the strictures on his life that being a servant provides. For Nicola, one behaves to do best by one's masters, and nothing more. For him, this is his kind of nobility, or a kind of high-mindedness, and to do any different would be to behave dishonorably.

Louka, however, sees these social considerations as open to change. She doesn't believe that being born a servant means one has to accept this mantle, or behave that way for the rest of one's life. Louka instead wants to do everything she can, within her capacity as a servant, to

upend social hierarchies. Her goal is to achieve a nobility not just of manner, as perhaps Nicola has in his dependability, but of actual practice. She wants to be a lady.

The paradox is that Nicola observes a stricter set of social norms. He is perhaps more truthful than Louka. Louka, however, is willing to lie and cheat within reason in order to further her own aspirations, which involve becoming a member of a higher class. And so this relationship of power to servitude is drawn out between them, and eventually leads to the amicable dissolution of their engagement.

*“I have no ambition to shine as a tradesman; so I have taken the advice of that bagman of a captain that settled the exchange of prisoners with us at Peerot, and given it up.”*

Sergius complains in Act Two about precisely the view of soldiering that Bluntschli holds. Bluntschli thinks that being a soldier is simply fulfilling a job that entails loyalty and courage without necessarily being honorable. For Sergius, being a soldier has much more to do with issues of pride and self-regard. After all, Sergius led the doomed charge on the Serbians, which succeeded only by luck, because he wants to look the part of the soldier

and commander. As many characters note, and as Sergius himself is willing to admit, he does not have the natural skill in warfare that Bluntschli does. He will never be promoted through the ranks as others might be who understand the art of war. Rather than admit to war as an art or craft he does not possess, Sergius instead resigns his commission.

This marks the beginning of Sergius's slippage from a position of moral authority in the work. Soon thereafter, he begins flirting seriously with Louka, who is shocked by his duplicity as regards Sergius's engagement to Raina. And when Sergius finally loses Raina to Bluntschli, he winds up marrying Louka, a woman who is looking to improve her own social station by finding a nobleman willing to “stoop” to marrying her.

*“My husband has just returned, with my future son-in-law; and they know nothing. If they did, the consequences would be terrible. You are a foreigner: you do not feel our national animosities as we do.”*

Catherine says this to Bluntschli in Act Two. She wants to make sure that her behavior with Raina, in helping Bluntschli to avoid detection by the Bulgarians, will not upset her carefully orchestrated plans. While Louka wishes to improve her life by no longer being a servant, Catherine wants to maintain the family's social advantages by ensuring that Raina marries a worthy man. Catherine plays up the idea, which recurs in the work, that there is something special about being a Bulgarian. She thinks Bulgaria it is a country poised between modernity and tradition. In Bulgaria, nobility and pride matter, whereas, as Catherine assumes for Bluntschli, being a Swiss means being entirely given over to markets and money-making.

Ironically, the money that Bluntschli acquires from exactly these means is well worth Catherine's consideration by the end of the play, when she realizes that Bluntschli's fortune far exceeds the Petkoffs'. Catherine protects the family's name, but understands that that name must sit atop a pile of money. Bluntschli, in addition to his mixture of charm and even-headedness, has a good amount of money to spare. It is useful to note that Bluntschli's Swiss heritage makes him “neutral” in every sense. He is neutral in being a mercenary in war. But he is also a man from a country that itself has tried hard to avoid alliances with other countries over the centuries, and to preserve its position as a part of Europe cut off from some of the bloodier conflicts that have wracked the continent. In the same way, Bluntschli is “neutral” to conflicts as much as is possible, avoiding both the Bulgarians who track him down, and fleeing from the Serbs with whom he fought in their battle with Sergius's men.

### **Theme: The arbitrary nature of social status**

The social station of the characters in the play is one of the dynamics that becomes most pronounced by its end. Louka wants to be more than a servant, whereas Nicola seems content to remain one. Bluntschli appears to be middle class, but reveals later that he is far, far wealthier than the noble Petkoffs. Petkoff and Catherine want Raina to reinforce the family's position however she can, either by marrying the ostensibly bravest man in Bulgaria, Sergius, or by adding greatly to the family's coffers by joining with Bluntschli. As in any marriage narrative of the nineteenth century, romantic love might be a part of the marriage calculation, as it certainly

didn't hurt to love one's partner. But that is far from the point of marriage in this time period. Characters want to unite noble families and improve financial situations. What romantic love tends to do in these situations, then, is cut across and destabilize what might be the otherwise orderly transfer of money between families.

### **The revelation**

Sergius doesn't get a promotion to a higher rank even though he won a great victory for the Bulgarians. It makes Sergius realize that soldiering is a trade like any other trade. It is not 'heroism' but 'coward's act' of attacking your enemy when you are strong and keeping yourself away from the enemy when you are not strong. Again, Sergius also learns that Raina made love to Bluntschli behind his back. Sergius is also not an honest man as far as higher love is concerned. He made love with Louka, the maid-servant, behind Raina's back. When Raina discovers this fact, her romantic notion of higher love is shattered; and Bluntschli's practical ideas attract her more than those of Sergius. However, in these manners, the romantic view of love and soldiering is exposed and ridiculed by Shaw.

### **Drifting away from reality**

In order to achieve his anti-romantic purpose, George Bernard Shaw has taken the help of exaggeration of reality. A fugitive soldier may demand food when he is starving, but it is hard to believe that he would demand chocolate. In this play, Bluntschli demands chocolate from Raina when he returns from battle field after three days. Again, higher class person like Sergius usually marries a higher class woman like Raina but in this case, he agrees to marry Louka, the maid servant of Raina's family. Although Bluntschli says that soldiers are born fools, it is not credible to them to not observe a pistol lying before them, even, after a thorough search, while a maid servant like Louka notices it as soon as she enters into the room.

However, though it is an anti-romantic play, and the dramatist undoubtedly has succeeded in exposing the romantic notions of life, the play has enough romance in it. The play opens with a romantic setting. There are thrill, shootings, fugitives and pursuers. There is also a romantic knight and his heroic cavalry charge.

**Who really runs the household, Petkoff or Catherine? Who holds the power in the relationships? How do the women in this play prove themselves to be just as powerful and intelligent, if not more so, than the men. They may not have been allowed in actual battle at the time, but what kind of battles do the women in this play fight?**

In George Bernard Shaw's play *\*Arms and the Man\**, the dynamics of power within the household and the relationships are quite nuanced, and the women certainly prove themselves to be formidable in their own ways.

**\*\*Who Runs the Household:\*\***

Petkoff and Catherine Petkoff, while seemingly having traditional roles, are actually more complex in their power dynamics. On the surface, Petkoff appears to be the dominant figure, especially given his role as a soldier and his authoritative demeanor. However, Catherine, his wife, exhibits significant influence and control over household affairs. Her practical nature and understanding of social nuances allow her to manage domestic matters effectively.

**\*\*Power in Relationships:\*\***

1. **\*\*Catherine Petkoff:\*\*** Catherine is portrayed as intelligent and perceptive. She often subtly manipulates situations to her advantage. For instance, she is the one who handles the practical aspects of their home and manages the affairs of the household with a keen sense of diplomacy. Her intelligence is evident when she navigates social expectations and familial duties, showing a blend of practicality and shrewdness that gives her considerable power.

2. **\*\*Raina Petkoff:\*\*** Raina, Petkoff's daughter, initially seems to be a naive romantic, but her actions reveal a deeper strength. She is the one who challenges conventional ideas about heroism and love. Her romance with the soldier Bluntschli and her eventual disillusionment with the idealistic notions of war and heroism show her growth and inner strength. Her ability to think independently and challenge her own beliefs reflects her power.

## **\*\*Battles Fought by Women:\*\***

The women in *\*Arms and the Man\** do not engage in physical battles but fight their own battles in different ways:

1. **\*\*Social Expectations:\*\*** Catherine and Raina navigate and challenge the expectations placed upon them by society. Catherine's battles are more practical and related to managing the household and maintaining social status, while Raina grapples with her romantic ideals versus the realities she faces.
2. **\*\*Emotional and Moral Battles:\*\*** Raina's internal conflict about the true nature of heroism and her romantic idealism versus the harsh realities of war is a significant battle. Her ultimate choice to embrace a more realistic view and to support Bluntschli reflects her emotional and moral strength.
3. **\*\*Domestic and Social Influence:\*\*** Both women influence their immediate environment and the people around them. Catherine's control over household matters and her role in managing relationships show her indirect but effective power. Raina's shift in perspective and her role in uniting with Bluntschli challenge traditional romantic and heroic ideals.

In conclusion, while the men in *\*Arms and the Man\** may hold overt positions of power and authority, the women demonstrate their own forms of strength and influence. They fight battles of social expectation, personal belief, and emotional complexity, proving themselves to be equally, if not more, powerful and intelligent in their own right.

## **Summary: Beginning of Act Three to Nicola's conversation with Louka**

The scene shifts to the library, where Bluntschli is drawing up the troop movements for Petkoff and Sergius, both of whom are in awe of his abilities. Petkoff wonders where his old coat went. He's wearing a replacement and doesn't like it. Catherine tells him his coat is in the closet where he left it, and Petkoff bets a large sum it isn't there. When Nicola does in fact bring the coat in, Petkoff is flummoxed and Catherine and Raina are not surprised, as it was Bluntschli who returned that coat the same morning. Sergius and Petkoff leave the library, Sergius somewhat embarrassed by Bluntschli's expertise and leadership in drawing up the plans for the troops.

Raina and Bluntschli are alone for the first time since his arrival. Raina says that Bluntschli looks better than he did the first time they met, and he replies that he's had a chance to wash up. Raina, pressing him, gets him to admit that he told the story of hiding in Raina's to only one man, whom Bluntschli trusted. But he learns from Raina that that man relayed this story to Petkoff and Sergius in the encampment. This worries Bluntschli, and Raina says that, if Sergius finds out that Bluntschli is the soldier from the story, he'll challenge Bluntschli to a duel.

Bluntschli replies that Raina should not tell Sergius his identity. Raina is aghast at this, since it would mean her telling a lie. She says she has only lied one other time in her life, which was when she told the army officer that Bluntschli wasn't present in her room. Bluntschli says that, in his line of work, lying is commonplace, as is people trying to save their lives. He has no trouble with Raina's lying, which she sees as a slip in character. He believes she should keep the secret from Sergius. When Raina becomes even more indignant, Bluntschli tells her to stop acting high and mighty. This shocks Raina thoroughly. She admits that no man has ever spoken to her honestly, and without idolizing her. She says that Bluntschli doesn't take her seriously, but he replies that he's in fact the first man to take her seriously.

Bluntschli declares that he is infatuated with Raina. She admits to leaving a picture of herself for Bluntschli in the pocket of her father's coat that Bluntschli wore when he escaped the house. She assumed he would have seen it there. But Bluntschli did not find the picture, and Raina figures it must still be present in the pocket of the coat that Petkoff is now wearing. Bluntschli admits that he's not sure whether the picture is there, on second thought, because he had the

coat pawned during the battle before he reclaimed it. This horrifies Raina. Louka enters to deliver a letter for Bluntschli that says his father has died. Bluntschli responds with dismay only at all the affairs that must be sorted out, since, Bluntschli realizes, his father was manager of far more hotels than he thought initially. Bluntschli leaves to begin planning his departure. Raina departs, and Nicola enters, finding Louka alone.

*“If you were twenty-three when you said those things to me this afternoon, I shall take them seriously.”*

In Act Three, Bluntschli worries that because he perceives Raina to have been a just girl when he met her, she was not capable of making lasting statements of romantic love. Thus he places a hard limit on the notion that Raina’s youth makes her unmarriageable. But of course Raina is the same person at seventeen as she is at her real age of twenty-three. This indicates, perhaps, the limits of Bluntschli’s own rationality. He will not make a marriage proposal to a girl, only to a woman, but that insistence on rules ignores the fact that Raina, despite her relative youth in either case, has saved his life, and is clearly old enough to organize her affairs in other realms.

This comment is also an occasion for comedy, as Raina has argued she does not lie about anything. However, both Catherine and Raina are shocked when they find out that Bluntschli has believed Raina to be truthful about her own age. They believe that no woman could ever be truthful about age. This points to Bluntschli’s warm and childlike credulity, something that Raina finds as appealing as his desire for chocolate creams.

## **Arms and the Man Themes**

### **Ignorance vs. Knowledge**

*Arms and the Man* is concerned foremost with the clash between knowledge and ignorance, or, otherwise stated, between realism and romanticism. Raina and her fiancé Sergius are steeped in the romanticism of operettas and paperback novels. Bluntschli uses his superior knowledge to disabuse Raina of her military delusions, while the experience of war itself strips Sergius of the grand ideals he held. The couple’s idealized vision of warfare deflates in the face of additional information.

In the realm of love, the couple’s pretensions are defeated by the thoroughgoing pragmatism of their respective new matches: Bluntschli and Louka. Both the Swiss Captain and Bulgarian maid confront their lovers about the gap between their words and their true selves, exposing their hypocrisy. When faced with reality, both Raina and Sergius are able to abandon their romantic delusions and embrace their honest desires.

## **The Realities of War**

When Catherine and Raina imagine war they picture brave and dashing officers fighting honorable battles. The reality of war falls far from this romanticized vision. In the play's opening scene Bulgarian soldiers hunt and kill fleeing Serbians in the streets of a quiet mountain town. Once Captain Bluntschli, a career soldier, appears, he becomes an eloquent messenger for the horrors of war. He describes conditions of starvation and exhaustion at the front lines. Moreover, having been under fire for three days, he seems to be suffering from some form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, jumping nervously when Raina squeals. What first appears to be the most glorious moment in the war, Sergius' cavalry charge, is revealed to be an absurd case of dumb luck. Later in the play Captain Bluntschli helps Major Petkoff and Sergius coordinate the return routes of surviving troops so as to prevent starvation. Since the play begins in the aftermath of the Serbo-Bulgarian War, the reader doesn't experience any titillating battles, only a grinding post-war reality where hunger and death loom in the background. This picture successfully deflates any romantic notions the characters or audience may hold.

## **The Realities of Love**

Raina and Sergius are as delusional about love as they are about war, seeming to have derived their understanding of romance primarily from Byronic poetry. They celebrate each other with formal and pretentious declarations of "higher love", yet clearly feel uncomfortable in one another's presence. The couple, with their good looks, noble blood and idealistic outlook, seem to be a perfect match, but in George Bernard Shaw's world love does not function as it does in fairy tales. Instead Raina falls for the practical and competent Swiss mercenary that crawls through her bedroom window and Sergius for the pragmatic and clever household maid. Love does not adhere to conventions regarding class or nationality. Moreover, love is not some abstract expression of poetic purity. Love in *Arms and the Man* is ultimately directed at those who understand the characters best and who ground them in reality.

## **Class**

Class has a large and continuous presence in *Arms and the Man*. The Petkoffs' upper-class pretensions are portrayed as ridiculous and consistently played for laughs. The family's pride in their so-called library (a sitting room with a single bookshelf) becomes a running joke throughout the play. Shaw praises the family's more local and humble roots: admiring the oriental decorations in Raina's bedroom and describing Catherine's earthy local beauty. In contrast he condemns and mocks their attempts to conform to romantic notions of what nobility means. Raina's outdated Viennese fashions and Catherine's tea gowns are treated as ridiculous. Louka's struggle demonstrates many of the effects of class in Bulgarian society. She feels restricted by her station, which condemns her to a life where reading books is considered presumptuous. Using her wit, Louka manages to escape these boundaries, achieving equality with the wealthy Sergius.

## **Bravery**

At the beginning of the play Sergius, like both Catherine and Raina, imagines bravery as the will to undertake glorious and theatrical actions. This belief leads the young Bulgarian Major to lead a regiment of cavalry against a line of machine guns. Despite his dumb luck, the action identifies him as an incompetent and somewhat ludicrous figure, halting his advancement in the ranks. When he returns at the end of the war Louka challenges his romantic notions of bravery. Sergius admits that "carnage is cheap": anyone can have the will to inflict violence. Louka submits that the subtle bravery required to live outside social rules and constraints is more worthy of praise. At the play's end Sergius demonstrates this particular kind of bravery when he embraces Louka in front of the others and agrees to marry her.

Like Sergius, Captain Bluntschli also undermines traditional understandings of bravery. He tells Raina that there are two types of soldiers - young and old - not brave and cowardly. The young are too inexperienced to know true fear, and the old have reached their age by championing survivalism over heroics. The Swiss mercenary is willing to face danger when necessary but he does not act in ways that court death and is always relieved to avoid combat.

**"It is not much of a library".**

The Petkoffs' class pretensions become a running joke throughout *Arms and the Man*. Each family member proudly speaks of their library, supposedly the only one housed in a private home in all of Bulgaria. The beginning of the third act reveals that the so-called library is merely a sitting room with a single bookshelf. The Petkoffs' desire to embrace romanticized notions of wealth and nobility drives their pretentious behavior and consistently makes them ridiculous. By contrast, Captain Bluntschli's wealth, articulated in amounts of silverware and blankets, is eminently practical. It is not wealth that George Bernard Shaw skewers, but the romanticism and sense of superiority that can accompany it.

**"When you get into that noble attitude and speak in that thrilling voice, I admire you; but I find it impossible to believe a single word you say."**

With this comment Bluntschli finally succeeds in deflating Raina's pretensions. Her posturing and manufactured indignation are only a façade; by refusing to fall victim to her deceptions, Bluntschli is able to see Raina as she really is. Raina retorts that Bluntschli is the first man who does not take her seriously, but the captain counters her, saying he is the first man who does take her seriously. Bluntschli is somewhat charmed by her performance but realizes that it is only that: a performance, and he is attracted to what she keeps hidden. This moment represents the climax of a trend that has been building since the Swiss captain and Bulgarian lady met: Bluntschli confronts Raina's romantic delusions and deflates them. These confrontations generate intimacy and mutual attraction. After Bluntschli's accusation of posturing Raina admits her predilection for being theatrical and engages in perhaps the most honest and self-reflective conversation of her young life.

## **Discuss Nicola's motivations in the work. What motivates him? How do these motivations differ from those of Louka?**

### **Nicola's Motivations**

Nicola, a servant in the Petkoff household, is primarily motivated by a desire for stability, security, and maintaining the status quo. As a servant, he is content with his lowly position in society and has no ambitions to rise above his station. He is perfectly happy to continue serving the aristocratic Petkoff family for the rest of his life. Nicola's motivations are shaped by his pragmatic and practical nature. He values dependability and reliability over grand ambitions or dreams of social mobility. Nicola advises Louka, his fiancée, to act like a lady in order to attract a wealthy suitor, but he himself has no such aspirations. He is satisfied with his lot in life and sees no need to rock the boat or challenge the rigid class system that keeps him in a subordinate position.

### **Louka's Motivations**

In contrast, Louka is driven by a strong desire for social advancement and a better life. As a servant, she chafes at the limitations placed on her by the class-bound society in which she lives[4]. Louka is ambitious and unwilling to accept the expectation that she will remain poor and subordinate to her social betters for the rest of her days.

Louka's motivations lead her to openly flirt with and manipulate men of higher social standing, such as Captain Bluntschli and Sergius, in the hopes of marrying into a higher social class. She is not content to simply accept her lot in life like Nicola, but rather actively seeks to improve her circumstances through her own efforts and cunning.

### **Differences in Motivation**

The key difference between Nicola and Louka's motivations is their attitude towards the social order. Nicola is a firm believer in the status quo and has no desire to challenge or change the system that keeps him in a subordinate position. Louka, on the other hand, chafes at these limitations and is determined to better her station in life through her own efforts. Nicola's motivations are grounded in pragmatism and a desire for stability, while Louka's are driven by ambition and a refusal to accept her lot in life. This fundamental difference in worldview creates significant tension in their relationship and makes it unlikely that their engagement will lead to a successful marriage.

**In conclusion**, Nicola and Louka's vastly different motivations and attitudes towards the social order are a key source of conflict in *Arms and the Man*. While Nicola is content to maintain the status quo, Louka is determined to improve her circumstances through her own efforts, even if it means manipulating and flirting with men of higher social standing. This clash of motivations highlights the rigidity of the class system in which the characters live and the challenges faced by those who seek to challenge it.

### **How does George Bernard Shaw use farcical elements to further the play's theme?**

The play's primary theme revolves around the confrontation between knowledge and ignorance. Shaw uses farcical elements to highlight and dramatize this confrontation. Most farcical moments in the play revolve around a character's lack of information. The Major does not know his coat has been returned; Nicola does not know why he is being reprimanded for bringing in the captain's bags; the Major does not know who or what the chocolate cream soldier is. Ultimately all these farcical scenarios are resolved when knowledge is brought to bear.

## **Compare Raina's relationships with Bluntschli and Sergius in the first two acts of *Arms and the Man*.**

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Raina Petkoff's relationships with Sergius Saranoff and Captain Bluntschli in the first two acts of George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man* illustrate contrasting ideals of love and heroism.

### **Raina and Sergius**

Initially, Raina is infatuated with Sergius, whom she views as the epitome of a romantic hero. He is celebrated for his bravery in battle, having led a successful cavalry charge against the Serbs, which Raina admires deeply. This admiration is partly fueled by the societal expectations of love and heroism, as her family also idolizes Sergius, treating him as a noble figure. Raina's affection for him is tied to her romantic ideals, as she expresses a belief in a "higher love" that transcends mere physical attraction.

However, as the play progresses, it becomes evident that Raina's feelings may be more about the idea of love than genuine affection for Sergius. Their interactions appear to be performative, reflecting societal norms rather than true emotional connection. For instance, when they embrace, it seems more like a ritual than a sincere expression of love. Additionally, Raina's discovery of Sergius's flirtation with Louka, the maid, further complicates her feelings, revealing that Sergius is not the noble hero she imagined him to be.

### **Raina and Bluntschli**

In contrast, Raina's relationship with Captain Bluntschli begins under unusual circumstances when he enters her room seeking refuge. Bluntschli is pragmatic and disillusioned with the romantic notions of war, which starkly contrasts with Raina's initial ideals. He challenges her perceptions of heroism and love, presenting a more realistic view of life and relationships. Their interactions are marked by a genuine connection, as Raina finds herself drawn to Bluntschli's honesty and practicality, which resonate more with her evolving understanding of love.

Raina's feelings for Bluntschli develop quickly, and by the end of the second act, she is enamored with him, appreciating his authenticity and rejecting the superficiality of her previous infatuation with Sergius. Bluntschli represents a kind of love that is based on mutual respect and understanding, contrasting sharply with the idealized and somewhat hollow affection she feels for Sergius.

## Conclusion

In summary, Raina's relationships with Sergius and Bluntschli reflect her journey from romantic idealism to a more nuanced understanding of love. Sergius embodies the traditional heroic figure, admired for his bravery but ultimately flawed and superficial. In contrast, Bluntschli represents a more grounded and realistic approach to love, allowing Raina to discover a deeper connection that transcends societal expectations. This evolution highlights Shaw's critique of romanticism and the absurdities of war, ultimately favoring a more pragmatic view of human relationships.

*“Only think, mother, I doubted him: I wondered whether all his heroic qualities and his soldiership might not prove mere imagination when he went into a real battle. I had an uneasy fear that he might cut a poor figure there beside all those clever Russian officers.”*

The excerpt reflects a deep internal conflict and anxiety regarding a loved one's capabilities in a challenging situation, specifically in the context of battle. The speaker expresses doubt about the person's heroic qualities and skills as a soldier, suggesting a fear that these attributes might not hold up under the pressures of actual combat.

This sentiment can be analyzed in several ways:

**1-Emotional Conflict:** The speaker grapples with feelings of uncertainty and concern for the individual's performance in a real battle. This internal struggle highlights the tension between admiration for the person's perceived qualities and the fear that they may not be as formidable in reality.

**2-Themes of Heroism and Reality:** The mention of "heroic qualities" juxtaposed with the fear of inadequacy suggests a theme of the disparity between idealized heroism and the harsh realities of war. The speaker's doubt raises questions about what it truly means to be a hero and whether such qualities can withstand the brutal tests of real-life situations.

**3-Social Comparison:** The reference to "clever Russian officers" introduces a comparative element, indicating that the speaker is not only worried about the individual in question but also about how they will measure up against others. This comparison adds a layer of pressure and emphasizes the competitive nature of military environments.

Overall, the excerpt captures the essence of doubt and the complexities of human emotions in the face of potential conflict, reflecting broader themes of courage, identity, and the realities of warfare.

*"I am a romantic, and I am not ashamed of it. It is the only way to live."*

The statement "I am a romantic, and I am not ashamed of it. It is the only way to live." expresses a strong personal conviction about the value of romanticism in one's life. Here's a breakdown of the different elements of this statement:

**1. Self-Identification as a Romantic:**

- By declaring oneself a romantic, the speaker is identifying with a particular worldview or way of experiencing life. Romanticism, in this context, might refer to an emphasis on idealism, emotional depth, and the appreciation of beauty and passion.

**2. Pride and Defensiveness:**

- The speaker's lack of shame indicates a pride in their romantic outlook. This suggests that they might have faced criticism or skepticism about their perspective but remain steadfast and unapologetic.

**3. Romanticism as a Way of Life:**

- The assertion that romanticism is "the only way to live" reveals a deeply held belief that embracing romantic ideals is not just one option among many, but the singularly best or most fulfilling way to approach life. It implies a strong conviction that living with passion, idealism, and emotional engagement is essential to a meaningful existence.

# Waiting for Godot – Samuel Beckett

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# Waiting for Godot – Samuel Beckett

## The Author's Life

Samuel Beckett (1906–1989) was an Irish playwright, novelist, and poet, widely regarded as one of the most influential writers of the twentieth century. He was born in Dublin, Ireland, and studied French and Italian literature at Trinity College. Beckett was deeply influenced by modernist writers such as James Joyce, as well as existentialist philosophy and the absurdity of human existence. During World War II, he joined the French Resistance, which shaped his pessimistic view of life. Beckett wrote many of his major works in French and later translated them into English. His most famous play, *Waiting for Godot* (1953), revolutionized modern theatre and became a landmark of the Theatre of the Absurd. In 1969, Beckett was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for his innovative writing that explored the tragic and comic dimensions of human existence.

## 2. Plot Summary of the Play

*Waiting for Godot* is a play about two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon, who wait endlessly for a mysterious figure named Godot. Throughout the play, they engage in conversations about life, memory, suffering, and hope, while struggling with boredom and uncertainty. During their waiting, they meet Pozzo, a master, and Lucky, his servant, whose relationship reflects power and oppression. A boy appears at the end of each act to announce that Godot will not come that day but will surely come tomorrow. Despite their frustration and confusion, Vladimir and Estragon continue waiting, unable to leave or change their situation. The play lacks a traditional plot, climax, or resolution, emphasizing the absurdity of existence and the futility of human expectations.

## 3. Characters of the Play

### 1. Vladimir (Didi)

Vladimir is one of the two main characters in the play. He is more thoughtful, philosophical, and intellectual than Estragon. Vladimir often reflects on existential questions such as the meaning of life, time, memory, and faith. Unlike Estragon, he tries to maintain hope and believes that waiting for Godot has meaning. He represents the human desire for purpose and understanding in an absurd world. Vladimir is also more responsible and concerned about moral and religious issues, frequently referring to biblical stories. His character symbolizes the human mind that seeks meaning despite the emptiness of existence.

## 2. Estragon (Gogo)

Estragon is Vladimir's companion and the second main character. He is more emotional, physical, and practical than Vladimir. Estragon suffers from hunger, pain, and exhaustion, and he often forgets events of the past. He represents the human body and instinct rather than intellect. Estragon is impatient with waiting and frequently suggests leaving or committing suicide, but he never acts on his ideas. His dependence on Vladimir shows the fragility and weakness of human beings. Through Estragon, Beckett portrays the suffering and helplessness of humanity in a meaningless world.

## 3. Pozzo

Pozzo is a wealthy and powerful man who appears in the play with his servant Lucky. He represents authority, domination, and materialism. Pozzo treats Lucky cruelly, using him as a slave, which reflects social inequality and oppression. In Act I, Pozzo is confident, arrogant, and proud of his power. However, in Act II, he becomes blind and helpless, symbolizing the instability of power and the fragility of human control. Pozzo's character shows how power can be temporary and meaningless in the face of time and fate.

## 4. Lucky

Lucky is Pozzo's servant and symbolizes submission and slavery. He is silent most of the time and obeys Pozzo without question. Lucky represents the oppressed individual who loses freedom and identity under authority. His famous long speech reveals the chaos of human thought and the absurdity of intellectual systems. In Act II, Lucky becomes mute, emphasizing the loss of voice and individuality. Through Lucky, Beckett criticizes blind obedience and highlights the suffering caused by social and psychological oppression.

## 5. The Boy

The Boy is a mysterious messenger who appears at the end of each act. He informs Vladimir and Estragon that Godot will not come that day but will come tomorrow. The Boy represents uncertainty, hope, and the illusion of meaning. His repeated message symbolizes the endless postponement of human expectations. He also reflects innocence and obedience, as he follows Godot's instructions without understanding their significance. The Boy's character reinforces the theme of waiting and the absence of certainty in human life.

## Repetition Instead of Development

Instead of character development or plot advancement, the play relies heavily on repetition. Conversations, actions, and situations recur throughout the play. Vladimir and Estragon repeat the same questions, jokes, and discussions, while the Boy repeats the same message. This repetition reflects the monotony of human existence and the emptiness of language. It also suggests that humans are trapped in routines and habits that prevent them from achieving progress. Through repetition, Beckett expresses the idea that life is a continuous cycle of meaningless actions and unfulfilled hopes.

## Act I

### Plot Summary of

In Act I, Vladimir and Estragon meet on a country road near a tree and wait for a man named Godot. They talk about various topics, including life, memory, suffering, and religion, to pass the time. Their conversations reveal confusion, boredom, and existential anxiety. Pozzo and Lucky appear, demonstrating a master–slave relationship that reflects power and oppression. After Pozzo and Lucky leave, a Boy arrives and informs Vladimir and Estragon that Godot will not come that day but will come tomorrow. Although disappointed, they decide to continue waiting, unable to leave the place.



### • Pozzo and Lucky: Power and Slavery

Pozzo and Lucky represent the relationship between power and submission. Pozzo embodies authority, control, and arrogance, while Lucky symbolizes obedience and oppression. Their relationship reflects social hierarchies and class divisions in modern society. Pozzo's cruelty toward Lucky reveals how power can dehumanize both the master and the slave. In Act II, the reversal of Pozzo's condition—his blindness and weakness—shows the instability of power and the inevitability of decline. Lucky's silence further emphasizes the loss of individuality under oppression. Through Pozzo and Lucky, Beckett criticizes social injustice and exposes the fragility of human dominance.

### The Boy's Message

The Boy's announcement that Godot will not come today but will come tomorrow is a crucial moment in the play. His message reinforces the theme of endless waiting and postponement. The Boy represents innocence and uncertainty, as he delivers the same message without understanding its meaning. His repeated appearance at the end of each act symbolizes the cyclical nature of human hope. Godot's absence suggests that ultimate answers or salvation may never arrive.

Through the Boy's message, Beckett highlights the futility of human expectations and the illusion of certainty.

## Quotations

### 1. "Nothing to be done."

The statement "Nothing to be done" is one of the most significant lines in *Waiting for Godot*, as it captures the essence of existential despair and human helplessness. When Estragon utters this phrase at the beginning of the play, it reflects a sense of frustration, futility, and resignation. The line suggests that human beings often face situations in which action seems meaningless or impossible. It also reflects the philosophical idea of absurdity, where individuals struggle to find meaning in a world that offers no clear answers.

Moreover, the phrase reveals the psychological state of the characters, who feel trapped in an endless cycle of waiting and inactivity. Their inability to act symbolizes modern humanity's paralysis in the face of uncertainty. Beckett uses this line to introduce the audience to the central themes of the play: stagnation, hopelessness, and the absence of purpose. The repetition of this phrase throughout the play reinforces the idea that human life is characterized by repetitive struggles with no clear resolution. Thus, "Nothing to be done" becomes a powerful expression of existential reality and the tragic condition of mankind.

### 2. "We're waiting for Godot."

The line "We're waiting for Godot" represents the central action and meaning of the play. It expresses the characters' dependence on an unknown figure who never appears. Godot symbolizes hope, salvation, authority, or meaning, depending on interpretation. By declaring that they are waiting for Godot, Vladimir and Estragon reveal their inability to define their own purpose without external guidance.

This line reflects the human condition of waiting for something that may never come—whether it is God, success, happiness, or certainty. It also illustrates the theme of faith and doubt, as the characters believe in Godot's arrival despite repeated disappointment. Beckett uses this statement to criticize blind dependence on external forces and the illusion of meaning. The repetition of the line throughout the play emphasizes the cyclical nature of hope and frustration. Ultimately, "We're waiting for Godot" symbolizes humanity's endless search for meaning in an indifferent universe.

### 3. “That passed the time.”

The phrase “That passed the time” highlights the characters’ primary concern: filling the emptiness of time while waiting. Vladimir and Estragon engage in meaningless conversations, jokes, and arguments not to achieve anything significant, but merely to avoid boredom and silence. Time in the play is not progressive but stagnant; it does not lead to development or change.

This line reflects Beckett’s view of modern life as monotonous and repetitive. Human beings often create distractions to escape the awareness of their existential emptiness. By saying “That passed the time,” the characters reveal their fear of silence and their inability to confront the reality of their situation. The phrase also suggests that language itself has lost its purpose, becoming merely a tool to kill time rather than convey meaning. Beckett uses this line to expose the emptiness of human communication and the futility of existence in an absurd world.

## Symbols Analysis

### 1. The Tree: Symbol of Life, Hope, and the Passage of Time

The tree in *Waiting for Godot* is one of the most important symbols in the play. At first glance, it appears as a simple, almost insignificant object in an empty landscape. However, its symbolic meaning is deeply connected to the themes of life, hope, and time. In Act I, the tree is almost bare, suggesting barrenness, sterility, and despair. In Act II, it shows a few leaves, indicating a slight change and hinting at renewal and hope. This subtle transformation suggests that time has passed, even though the characters feel trapped in stagnation.

The tree also symbolizes life itself. Like human existence, it stands alone in an empty world, enduring the passage of time without clear purpose. Furthermore, the tree is associated with religious symbolism, recalling the biblical Tree of Knowledge or the Cross, which connects it to themes of faith and salvation. Vladimir and Estragon even consider hanging themselves from the tree, which turns it into a symbol of both life and death.

Thus, the tree represents the paradox of human existence: the tension between hope and despair, continuity and stagnation, life and death. Through this symbol, Beckett expresses the fragile and uncertain nature of hope in an absurd world.

### 2. The Road: Symbol of Life’s Journey and Uncertainty

The road in *Waiting for Godot* symbolizes the journey of human life and the uncertainty of existence. It is a place of movement and possibility, yet the characters remain stationary on it, unable to move forward. This contradiction reflects the human condition: although life is a journey, individuals often feel stuck and unable to progress. The road also represents choice and freedom.

In theory, Vladimir and Estragon could leave the road and continue their journey, but they choose to stay and wait. This highlights the theme of fear of action and responsibility. The road therefore becomes a symbol of unrealized potential and missed opportunities.

Moreover, the road suggests the unpredictability of life. Travelers like Pozzo and Lucky appear and disappear, showing that life is filled with unexpected encounters and changes. Yet these events do not alter the protagonists' situation, reinforcing the idea that life lacks meaningful direction. In a broader sense, the road reflects existential uncertainty. Humans travel through life without knowing their destination or purpose. By placing the characters on an endless road, Beckett portrays life as a journey without clear meaning or final destination. The road thus becomes a powerful symbol of human existence, uncertainty, and the illusion of progress.

## Themes

### **1. Human Dependence on External Forces**

The play emphasizes human dependence on external forces such as God, fate, or authority. Vladimir and Estragon rely on Godot to give meaning to their lives. They are unable to act independently or make decisions without waiting for him. This dependence reflects the human tendency to seek guidance from outside sources rather than taking responsibility for one's own life. Beckett suggests that such dependence leads to paralysis and frustration, as external forces may never respond.

### **2. Fear of Action and Responsibility**

Vladimir and Estragon repeatedly consider leaving or changing their situation, but they never act. Their fear of responsibility prevents them from taking decisive steps. This hesitation reflects the existential idea that freedom can be frightening. Humans often prefer waiting and dependence to the burden of choice. Beckett portrays action as difficult and responsibility as terrifying in an absurd world.

## **Features of the Play**

### **1. Two Acts with Parallel Events**

The two acts of the play mirror each other in structure and events. Similar situations, dialogues, and encounters occur in both acts, creating a sense of repetition and circularity. This parallelism emphasizes the monotony of life and the absence of progress. The characters remain trapped in the same condition despite the passage of time.

### **2. Static Setting**

The setting of the play is simple and unchanging: a country road and a tree. This static environment reflects the stagnation of the characters' lives. The lack of detailed scenery focuses attention on dialogue and ideas rather than action. The unchanging setting symbolizes the emptiness and isolation of human existence.

### **3. Repetition of Dialogues and Actions**

Repetition is a key feature of the play. The characters repeat the same conversations, jokes, and actions. This repetition reflects the absurdity of life and the failure of communication. Beckett uses repetition to show how language loses meaning and how humans are trapped in routines.

### **4. Open Ending**

The play ends without resolution. Godot never arrives, and the characters continue waiting. This open ending reflects the uncertainty of human existence and the impossibility of definitive answers. Beckett leaves the audience with unanswered questions, emphasizing the absurd nature of life.

# Act Two

## **Plot Summary**

Act II of *Waiting for Godot* continues the cyclical structure of the play, showing that little has changed since Act I. Vladimir and Estragon return to the same barren landscape, where the tree has grown a few leaves. They attempt to recall the events of the previous day but remain confused and uncertain. Pozzo and Lucky reappear, but their roles have changed dramatically: Pozzo is now blind, and Lucky is mute. Their relationship becomes even more tragic and absurd, revealing the fragility of human power and identity. Later, the Boy arrives again with the same message that Godot will not come today but surely tomorrow. Despite their frustration and despair, Vladimir and Estragon decide once more to wait. The act ends exactly as it began, emphasizing repetition, uncertainty, and the meaningless passage of time.

### **\*Pozzo Becomes Blind; Lucky Becomes Mute**

The transformation of Pozzo and Lucky in Act II symbolizes the instability of human power and identity. In Act I, Pozzo is a powerful master and Lucky a submissive servant. In Act II, Pozzo is blind and helpless, while Lucky is mute and unable to think or speak. This reversal shows how quickly human status can change and how fragile authority is. Pozzo's blindness represents the loss of control and vision in life, while Lucky's muteness symbolizes the silencing of reason and thought. Their relationship becomes more tragic, highlighting the cruelty and dependency inherent in human relationships. Beckett uses their transformation to criticize social hierarchies and to show that power and intelligence are temporary and unreliable in an absurd world.

### **\*The Boy Repeats the Same Message**

The Boy's repeated message in Act II reinforces the theme of uncertainty and false hope. Just as in Act I, the Boy tells Vladimir and Estragon that Godot will not come today but will surely come tomorrow. This repetition creates a sense of endless postponement and unfulfilled promises. The Boy's inability to remember meeting them before also reflects the instability of memory and identity in the play. His message symbolizes the human tendency to cling to hope even when there is no evidence that it will be fulfilled. Beckett uses the Boy to represent religious, philosophical, and existential uncertainty, suggesting that humans continue to wait for meaning, salvation, or change, even when such expectations may be illusions.

## **\*Vladimir and Estragon Continue Waiting**

Despite their growing frustration and despair, Vladimir and Estragon continue waiting for Godot in Act II. Their inability to leave reflects human dependence on hope and fear of change. Although they repeatedly express a desire to go, they remain trapped in indecision and uncertainty. Their waiting symbolizes the human condition, where individuals search for meaning in a meaningless world. Beckett portrays their relationship as both supportive and conflictual, showing that companionship is the only relief from existential loneliness. Their continued waiting emphasizes the absurdity of life, where humans persist in expecting answers that never come. Through Vladimir and Estragon, Beckett illustrates the tragic yet comic nature of human existence.

### **Quotations Act II**

#### **1-“Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it’s awful.”**

This quotation reflects the central theme of stagnation and meaninglessness in Act II. Vladimir expresses frustration with the repetitive nature of their existence, where no significant events occur. The line emphasizes the absurdity of time, which passes without progress or purpose. Beckett uses this statement to highlight the existential condition of humanity, where individuals often feel trapped in routines and unable to change their circumstances. The repetition of “nobody” underscores loneliness and isolation, suggesting that human connections are fragile and unreliable. Moreover, the phrase “it’s awful” combines tragedy and comedy, a characteristic feature of Beckett’s absurd style. The quote reveals Vladimir’s awareness of the emptiness of their waiting, yet he continues to wait, showing the paradox of human hope. Thus, the line encapsulates the philosophical essence of the play: life is repetitive, purposeless, and absurd, yet humans persist in searching for meaning.

#### **2-“We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?”**

This quotation expresses the existential anxiety of Vladimir and Estragon. Vladimir suggests that their actions and conversations are merely attempts to prove their existence. The line reflects the existentialist idea that human identity is uncertain and must be constantly affirmed. Beckett implies that people engage in meaningless activities to avoid confronting the emptiness of life. The phrase “impression we exist” suggests that existence itself is doubtful and fragile. Through this quote, Beckett explores the psychological need for purpose and recognition in a world without inherent meaning. The use of humor softens the philosophical depth, making the audience laugh while confronting disturbing truths about human existence. Ultimately, the quote reveals that waiting for Godot is not only a physical act but also a psychological strategy to cope with existential uncertainty.

**3-“They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it’s night once more.”**

This quotation is one of the most philosophical statements in Act II. It expresses Beckett’s pessimistic view of human life as a brief moment between birth and death. The metaphor of birth on a grave suggests that life is inseparable from death and suffering. The fleeting “light” symbolizes moments of awareness or happiness, which quickly disappear into darkness. Beckett uses this imagery to emphasize the futility of human existence and the inevitability of death. The quote reflects existential despair and the absurd nature of life, where meaning is temporary and uncertain. At the same time, the poetic language gives the line a universal and timeless quality, making it one of the most powerful expressions of Beckett’s philosophy in the play.

## **Symbols in Act II**

### **Symbol 1: The Tree**

The tree in Act II symbolizes hope, time, and the possibility of change. Unlike Act I, the tree now has a few leaves, suggesting that time has passed and that life may still exist in a barren world. However, the tree remains largely lifeless, reflecting the limited and uncertain nature of hope. Vladimir and Estragon consider hanging themselves from it, turning the symbol of life into a symbol of death. This contradiction reflects the ambiguity of human existence, where hope and despair coexist. The tree also represents religious symbolism, possibly referring to the biblical Tree of Life or the Cross, suggesting the human search for salvation. Beckett uses the tree to show that even the smallest signs of change can create illusions of meaning in an absurd world.

### **Symbol 2: Blindness and Muteness**

Pozzo’s blindness and Lucky’s muteness symbolize the collapse of reason, power, and communication. Blindness represents the loss of insight and control, while muteness represents the inability to express thought and identity. Together, they reflect the breakdown of human relationships and social structures. Pozzo, once powerful, becomes dependent and helpless, showing that authority is temporary and fragile. Lucky, once intellectual, loses his voice, symbolizing the silencing of rational thought in an absurd universe. Beckett uses these symbols to illustrate the unpredictability of life and the instability of human roles. They also represent existential alienation, where individuals lose their sense of self and connection with others.

## **Themes of Act II**

### **Theme 1: Absurdity of Existence**

The theme of absurdity dominates Act II, as Beckett portrays life as repetitive, meaningless, and irrational. Vladimir and Estragon's endless waiting for Godot reflects humanity's search for purpose in a world without clear answers. The repetition of events, the lack of progress, and the failure of communication all emphasize the absurd nature of existence. Beckett suggests that humans are trapped in a cycle of hope and disappointment, unable to escape their condition. The comic elements of the play coexist with tragic undertones, highlighting the paradox of human life. Through absurd situations and dialogue, Beckett challenges traditional dramatic structure and philosophical assumptions about meaning, time, and identity.

### **Theme 2: Time and Memory**

In Act II, time and memory are unstable and unreliable. Characters struggle to remember past events, and time appears cyclical rather than linear. The repetition of events suggests that time does not lead to progress but merely repeats itself. Vladimir and Estragon's confusion about yesterday reflects the fragility of human memory and identity. Beckett uses this theme to question the traditional concept of time as a source of development and meaning. Instead, time becomes a burden that traps individuals in monotony. The uncertainty of time reinforces the existential idea that life lacks direction and purpose, and that human beings are unable to grasp the reality of their existence.

## Quotations

### **1-“We have been here before, haven’t we?”**

This quotation reflects the circular nature of time in *Waiting for Godot*. Vladimir’s question expresses uncertainty and repetition, suggesting that past and present are indistinguishable. This line symbolizes the endless cycle of human existence, where individuals repeat the same actions without progress. The phrase also reflects existentialist philosophy, particularly the idea that life lacks clear direction or meaning. Vladimir’s doubt shows the fragility of memory and identity, as he cannot distinguish reality from repetition. Moreover, the line emphasizes the theme of stagnation: despite their desire to leave, the characters remain trapped in the same place and situation. Beckett uses repetition to illustrate the absurdity of life, where humans search for meaning but find only uncertainty. This quotation also reveals psychological anxiety, as Vladimir senses that nothing has changed, despite the passage of time. Ultimately, the line suggests that waiting itself is a permanent condition of humanity, reinforcing Beckett’s bleak vision of existence.

### **2-“If Godot comes, everything will change.”**

This quotation highlights the central role of hope in the characters’ lives. Godot represents salvation, meaning, or divine intervention. Vladimir’s statement shows how deeply the characters depend on an external force to give purpose to their existence. The conditional structure (“if”) reveals uncertainty, suggesting that Godot’s arrival is doubtful. Beckett uses this line to criticize human dependence on unrealistic hopes and illusions. The belief that “everything will change” reflects humanity’s tendency to postpone action, waiting for a miraculous event instead of taking responsibility. Philosophically, the quotation echoes existentialist ideas, especially Sartre’s notion that humans must create their own meaning rather than rely on external authorities. The line also reflects religious symbolism, where Godot resembles God, whose presence is endlessly postponed. Thus, the quotation exposes the tragic irony of hope: while it sustains the characters emotionally, it also traps them in passivity. Beckett suggests that hope can be both a source of comfort and a cause of suffering.

### **3-“Nothing happens, yet we go on.”**

This quotation captures the essence of Beckett’s absurd theatre. The statement reflects the paradox of human existence: despite the absence of meaningful events, life continues. This line emphasizes the emptiness of action and the futility of waiting. The phrase “nothing happens” suggests the lack of progress, purpose, or resolution, while “we go on” reflects human persistence. Beckett portrays humanity as trapped between despair and endurance, unable to find meaning but unwilling to stop existing. The quotation also reflects existential philosophy, particularly Camus’s idea of the absurd, where humans confront a meaningless universe yet continue living. Dramatically, the line

reinforces the repetitive structure of the play, where dialogue and actions repeat without development. It also symbolizes psychological resilience: even in emptiness, humans continue to hope and survive. Ultimately, the quotation expresses Beckett's tragic vision of life as a continuous struggle against meaninglessness.

## **Power and Oppression**

### **1. Master–Slave Relationship (Pozzo and Lucky)**

In *Waiting for Godot*, Pozzo and Lucky symbolize the master–slave relationship and the imbalance of power between individuals. Pozzo dominates Lucky physically and psychologically, treating him as an object rather than a human being. Lucky carries Pozzo's bags, obeys his commands, and is tied by a rope, which visually represents oppression and control. This relationship reflects how authority can dehumanize the weak and how obedience can become a form of suffering. Lucky's silence and submission suggest that prolonged oppression destroys individuality and voice. When Lucky finally speaks, his speech is chaotic and meaningless, showing the damage caused by domination. Beckett uses their relationship to criticize systems of power that depend on exploitation and blind obedience. Through Pozzo and Lucky, the play exposes the cruelty and absurdity of hierarchical relationships in human society.

### **2. Social Inequality**

Pozzo and Lucky also represent social inequality in modern society. Pozzo embodies the wealthy, powerful upper class, while Lucky symbolizes the oppressed lower class. Pozzo's confidence, authority, and control contrast sharply with Lucky's weakness, silence, and suffering. Their relationship reflects how social structures create divisions between those who possess power and those who are forced to serve. Beckett suggests that social inequality is not only economic but also psychological and moral. Pozzo believes he has the right to dominate Lucky, which reflects society's acceptance of injustice and exploitation. Meanwhile, Lucky's inability to resist shows how marginalized individuals often internalize their oppression. Through these characters, Beckett criticizes social systems that maintain inequality and deny human dignity. The play thus becomes a reflection of the unfair distribution of power and privilege in human society.

### **3. Political Domination**

Pozzo and Lucky can also be interpreted as symbols of political domination. Pozzo represents authoritarian rulers or oppressive political systems, while Lucky symbolizes the oppressed masses who are forced to obey without question. The rope binding Lucky to Pozzo reflects the control exercised by political authorities over individuals and societies. Lucky's loss of freedom, voice, and identity mirrors how political oppression destroys human autonomy and critical thinking. Beckett suggests that political power often relies on coercion rather than justice, and that those in

power may become blind to human suffering. At the same time, the passivity of Lucky reflects the tragic reality of people who accept domination due to fear or habit. Through this symbolic relationship, Beckett exposes the absurdity and cruelty of political oppression and questions the legitimacy of authority.

## Major Symbols:

Symbol	Meaning
The Tree	Life, hope, time, biblical reference
The Road	Journey of life
Boots and Hats	Identity, suffering, social roles
Godot	Salvation, meaning, illusion
Repetition	Futility of existence

**Waiting for Godot**



**Critical Approaches Analysis**

### 1- Philosophical Interpretation (Existentialism)

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is deeply rooted in existential philosophy, particularly the ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. The play reflects the human condition in a world devoid of inherent meaning, where individuals struggle to find purpose in an absurd and indifferent universe. Vladimir and Estragon's endless waiting symbolizes humanity's persistent search for meaning despite the absence of certainty or resolution. The repetitive dialogue, circular structure, and lack of conventional plot emphasize the futility and monotony of existence. The characters' inability to remember the past or envision the future reflects existential anxiety and the instability of human identity. Waiting becomes a metaphor for life itself, where individuals postpone action in the hope of a future revelation that never comes.

Moreover, Beckett challenges traditional philosophical assumptions about time, logic, and causality. The play suggests that meaning is not inherent but must be created by individuals themselves. Through absurdity, silence, and repetition, Beckett dramatizes the existential dilemma: humans are condemned to wait, to hope, and to endure in a universe that offers no definitive answers.

## 2- Religious Interpretation

From a religious perspective, *Waiting for Godot* can be interpreted as an allegory of humanity's relationship with God and faith. Many critics view Godot as a symbolic representation of God or divine salvation. Vladimir and Estragon's constant waiting reflects the human longing for divine intervention, guidance, or redemption. However, Godot's perpetual absence suggests the uncertainty of religious faith in the modern world. The play raises fundamental theological questions about belief, doubt, and the silence of God. The characters' reliance on hope without evidence mirrors the spiritual condition of modern humanity, which struggles to reconcile faith with existential doubt. The repeated promise that Godot will come "tomorrow" echoes religious expectations of salvation deferred to an indefinite future.

Additionally, biblical references throughout the play reinforce its religious dimension. The discussion of the two thieves crucified alongside Christ highlights themes of salvation, grace, and randomness in divine judgment. Yet, Beckett avoids offering a clear religious message; instead, he presents faith as fragile, ambiguous, and open to interpretation. Ultimately, the religious reading of *Waiting for Godot* reveals Beckett's exploration of the tension between faith and uncertainty. The play does not affirm or deny God's existence but portrays the human need to believe in something beyond the visible world, even when such belief remains unfulfilled.

## 3- Social Interpretation

Socially, *Waiting for Godot* reflects the alienation and fragmentation of modern society. The characters exist in a barren landscape devoid of community, structure, or meaningful social relationships. Vladimir and Estragon's dependence on each other illustrates human isolation and the need for companionship in an increasingly disconnected world. The play also highlights class inequality and social hierarchies through the relationship between Pozzo and Lucky. Pozzo represents the privileged class, while Lucky symbolizes the exploited and marginalized individuals who suffer under oppressive systems. Their relationship exposes the cruelty and absurdity of social power structures.

Furthermore, Beckett criticizes modern society's passivity and inertia. The characters' endless waiting instead of action reflects a society trapped in routine and incapable of change. The absence of progress or development suggests the stagnation of social life in the twentieth century. Through minimalistic setting and repetitive dialogue, Beckett portrays a society stripped of meaning, where individuals are reduced to mere existence. Thus, the play becomes a powerful social critique of alienation, inequality, and the loss of human connection in modern civilization.

#### 4-Political Interpretation

Politically, *Waiting for Godot* can be read as a critique of authoritarian power and political oppression. Pozzo embodies tyranny, domination, and the abuse of authority, while Lucky represents the oppressed masses who are silenced and exploited. Their master–slave relationship mirrors political systems based on control and submission. The characters' waiting can also symbolize the political condition of societies that depend on leaders or ideologies for salvation. Vladimir and Estragon's expectation of Godot reflects the tendency of people to place blind trust in political figures or systems that promise change but fail to deliver it. The perpetual delay of Godot's arrival parallels the unfulfilled promises of political regimes.

Moreover, the play reflects the post-war political climate of Europe, marked by disillusionment, instability, and loss of faith in traditional ideologies. Beckett exposes the emptiness of political rhetoric and the futility of waiting for external solutions. By presenting power relations as absurd and meaningless, Beckett challenges the legitimacy of political authority. The play suggests that political systems, like Godot, often exist as illusions that sustain hope but never bring real transformation. Thus, *Waiting for Godot* becomes a profound political allegory of oppression, passivity, and the failure of political promises.

#### 5-Psychological Interpretation

Psychologically, the characters in *Waiting for Godot* can be interpreted as representations of different aspects of the human psyche. Vladimir and Estragon symbolize the divided self, reflecting the tension between reason and emotion, memory and forgetfulness, hope and despair. Their dependence on each other suggests the human need for psychological balance and companionship. Pozzo and Lucky also represent contrasting psychological forces. Pozzo embodies dominance, ego, and control, while Lucky represents repression, obedience, and unconscious suffering. Lucky's famous monologue reflects the chaotic flow of the unconscious mind, revealing suppressed thoughts and anxieties.

The repetitive actions and dialogues in the play resemble psychological patterns of obsession and neurosis. The characters' inability to leave or change their situation reflects existential paralysis and fear of freedom. Waiting becomes a psychological defense mechanism against the anxiety of making decisions. Furthermore, the barren setting symbolizes the inner emptiness of the human mind in the modern age. Beckett portrays human consciousness as fragmented, unstable, and trapped in cycles of thought and behavior.

## **Waiting for Godot – The Myth of Sisyphus –Arms and the Man**

A scholarly synthesis of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus*, and George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man* reveals a profound dialectic between the dismantling of social myths and the confrontation with existential void. George Bernard Shaw initiates this journey through the lens of "Anti-Romanticism," where he utilizes Captain Bluntschli to strip away the nineteenth-century "Sisyphean" delusions of military glory and romantic heroism. In Shaw's universe, the "boulder" is the weight of false social ideals; however, his perspective remains rooted in Victorian rationalism, suggesting that once we discard these illusions, a pragmatic, logical reality can be achieved.

Albert Camus moves beyond Shaw's rationalism by introducing the "Absurd" as an ontological condition. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, the struggle is no longer against social misconceptions but against the "unreasonable silence" of the universe. Camus's Sisyphus finds a tragic victory not by escaping his task, but through a conscious rebellion—acknowledging the futility of rolling the stone yet continuing the effort. This transitions the concept of heroism from Shaw's "correcting the error" to Camus's "enduring the truth."

Samuel Beckett provides the ultimate dramatic manifestation of this struggle in *Waiting for Godot*. While Shaw's character's act to reform and Sisyphus acts to rebel, Vladimir and Estragon exist in a state of suspended animation. They represent a "Sisyphus of Stasis," where the boulder is replaced by the agonizing weight of passing time. Beckett pushes the synthesis to its terminal point: if Shaw deconstructs the myth of the hero and Camus defines the philosophy of the struggle, Beckett depicts the exhaustion of the human spirit when the "boulder" of meaning never arrives. Together, these works map the modern condition from the death of romanticism to the birth of existential endurance.

***To what extent can the structural decay in *Waiting for Godot* be viewed not as a lack of action, but as a demonstration of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, where the characters represent the heat death of the universe?***

Most critics argue the play is "static," but a unique reading suggests it is actually "degrading." By applying the concept of entropy, we see that Act II is not a repetition of Act I, but a lower-energy version of it. The tree gains leaves (a false sign of life), but the human elements deteriorate: Pozzo is blind, Lucky is mute, and the tramps' memories are more fragmented.

The "heroism" in this context is the struggle against existential heat death. Vladimir and Estragon engage in "games" (language) to create friction and heat in a cooling universe. Their tragedy isn't that nothing happens, but that the energy required to sustain "nothing" is becoming increasingly unavailable. The play is a closed system where meaning is lost to the environment, proving that waiting is a dissipative process that eventually leads to the total exhaustion of the self.

***Using Marc Augé's theory of "Non-Places," how does the lack of geographical and historical markers in the play redefine the tramps as "permanent transients" rather than archetypal humans?***

Scholars usually call the setting "universal." However, a more specific, modern reading identifies the set as a "Non-Place" (like an airport terminal or a roadside). In these spaces, individuals lose their social identity and become merely "users" of the space.

Vladimir and Estragon are unique because they are stuck in a transit zone without a destination. By stripping the stage of history (save for a vague mention of the "Macon country"), Beckett suggests that the modern condition is defined by dislocation. They are not "everyman"; they are the "no-man" created by a world that has turned the earth into a series of bypasses. Their wait for Godot is an attempt to turn a "Non-Place" back into a "Place"—to give a nameless road a history and a purpose through their presence.

*How do the physical ailments—Estragon's feet, Vladimir's prostate, Pozzo's blindness—function as a "somatic protest" against the metaphysical silence of the world?*

Traditional analysis treats the tramps' physical pain as mere slapstick or a symbol of human frailty. A fresh perspective argues that their bodies are rebellious entities that refuse to be ignored while the mind waits for a metaphysical savior.

While the character's focus on the "higher" goal of waiting for Godot (the spirit/intellect), their bodies insist on the "lower" reality of pain (the flesh). The boots that don't fit and the difficulty of urinating are not just gags; they are the body's way of anchoring the characters in the "Now" when they are trying to live in the "Future" (the arrival). This creates a "body-soul" dualism where the characters' physical suffering is the only honest thing in a world of dishonest hope.