

Theatre of the Absurd: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*



Write an essay of at least 750 words about one of the following topics (or propose your own):

- Several references are made to the nature of “truth” throughout the play. Write an essay in which you analyze the idea of truth and define the nature of truth as is expressed through the play.
- Explain the symbolic significance of coins in the play. Analyze the scenes that involve coin tosses. How do coins and gambling relate to the concepts of order vs. chance and fate vs. free will?
- Discuss the play’s relationship to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. How does Stoppard reconstruct the basic plot of *Hamlet* from an entirely new perspective? Which elements of *Hamlet* does Stoppard alter or recreate? Which elements does he leave intact? Why do you think he made these particular choices?
- Write a character sketch of the Player. What adjectives would you use to describe him? What is his role throughout the play? How does he treat his actors? How does he interact with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern? What are his views concerning drama vs. real life?
- Read Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, a play, in many ways, similar to *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. Choose a theme, idea, conflict, motif, or trope common to each play and analyze how each is treated. You may have extra time if you choose this topic.

You are expected to use direct quotes from the play(s). Your essay should be formatted in accordance with MLA guidelines (especially citations). If you are only citing *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, you do not need a works cited page. The only information outside of the play (or plays) that you might need would be historical. You should not be citing criticism. You should be making your own criticism. In other words, you will be marked down for any use of Sparknotes.

Due date: 12/23