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The Zoo Story Details

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From Reader Review The Zoo Story for online ebook

Erika says

I had to read this for my English class and I am so glad I did. Not only did I understand it, but it was broken down so well I was blown away. This is a play about two men, it has underlying tones of homosexuality, loneliness, unhappiness and that's just to name a few things. It is short but so very powerful. I would recommend this play and suggest you read it with someone and have a discussion on it. It's interesting to see everyone's take on this.

Josefina Wagner says

Sadece 40 dakikalik bir anlatimi olan hikaye beklentimin altinda kaldi diyebilirim. Belki ilerde oyun olarak izlerim sanki bir eksiklik var gibi turkceye cevirim yapanlara her zaman biraz kuskuyla yaklasiyorum. ne mutlu orginalinde okuyabilenlere. Gecmis deki cevirmenler gibilerini bulmak zor oluyor. Simdide var iyi ceviri yapanlar ama her yayin evi ile calismiyorlar ne yazik ki. Biraz agresiv bir anlatim di konu olarak dedigim gibi eksiklik hissettim anlatimda.

Steffi says

Jahre, ach was Jahrzehnte, liegt die Lektüre zurück. Wir laden es im Englisch-unterricht und wir haben es gehasst.
Lag evtl. mehr an Schule als am Text.

Mike says

I'm sure that one can read this play in any number of ways. I choose to see Peter and Jerry as doppelgängers--the former living a life we are all conditioned to think is normal/successful, while the latter lives a life of lonely isolation. Jerry expresses a deep fear underlying the mask of respectability structuring Peter's life--the fear that Peter's life might indeed be more of a "zoo" than he cares to admit. Their meeting represents Peter's encounter with himself--one he resists due to the horrifying possibility of self-knowledge. To me, the ending suggests not that Peter escapes or destroys Jerry, but that Jerry transfers or merges his reality with Peter, who is forever changed by an encounter that, in the words of Werner Herzog, melts away the thin layer of civilization that crystalizes like ice over a deep ocean of chaos and darkness.

Sarah says

Dunno what to say! I'm still shocked...

Peyton Van amburgh says

I found this old essay I wrote about this play my senior year of college. it's pretty fantastic. I got to read it out loud in front of the class. SPOILERS

The Zoo Story is a play about two seemingly opposite men, Peter and Jerry, conversing in Central Park about their family and home-life. Jerry tells a long, rambled story about a conflict between he and his landlady's dog that seems to have little significance to anything. Peter and Jerry's encounter begins rather comically, but ends in shocking, sudden violence. After Peter accidentally kills Jerry, the conflict between Jerry and the dog suddenly symbolizes Jerry's conflict with his own existence. Jerry dies in order to feel an un-compromised, active emotion from another person (or thing).

In the end, Jerry's desire to be killed in anger is a response to a struggle he seems to have with himself and those around him. It suddenly becomes clear, after he is killed, why Jerry told "the story of Jerry and the Dog". In the story, Jerry confesses sadness and humility that he and the dog no longer fight with each other, that instead they have "attained a compromise" where they "neither love nor hurt because [they] do not try to reach each other" (Albee 20). He is humiliated because both he and the dog have given up; they merely "regard each other with a mixture of sadness and suspicion" and "feign indifference" (20). When Peter decides to leave the park and go back to his home, one gets the sense that if Jerry had let him leave, then their relationship would have ended just like that of he and the dog, that of sadness and suspicion, where neither is loved nor hurt by the other. However, Jerry sacrifices himself in order to avoid such a compromise, devoid of any active emotion.

"The story of Jerry and the Dog" alludes to Jerry's own struggles with humanity itself. We learn details of his troubled upbringing, his non-existent parents, his confused sexuality, all of which give us the impression that he is a man tortured by life's ambiguities and ambivalence. He says "a person has to have some way of dealing with SOMETHING...if not with people" (19). Because of his unhappiness and detachment from other people, Jerry expresses the need for connection, which can come from anything, everything from pornographic playing cards, to a street corner, to a mirror ("that's one of the last steps"). Jerry provokes the confrontation with Peter that ultimately ends in his own death, because he wants to be reassured that resistance to a compromise of ambivalence is possible.

One could say that by "voluntarily" dying, Jerry has given up on life, that he no longer wants to live. However, the reason for Jerry's sadness and humility is because he is unable to find anyone, or thing, which is willing to be loved or hurt by him, or vice versa. The ambivalence of emotions is what depresses him the most. By allowing himself to be hurt, he is able to find reassurance that, even though he dies in process, he is able to connect with someone on an emotional level, he feels their emotion. As he lays dying, he reassures Peter that he is not a "vegetable" but rather, he is an "animal" (27). He is pleased to see that Peter has not given in to his own emotions, desires, and instincts; he is willing to stand for something by defending "his bench".

In order to avoid living in an existence of compromise, Jerry provokes Peter to kill him, as a test for himself to see that morality and ethics can still exist. Through dying, he is able to be hurt by another person, establishing an emotional connection rather than compromise.

Maitena says

Leaves you thinking. It was good.

Hossein Sharifi says

Highly recommended

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SPOILER ALERT REVIEW !
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Genre:

Theatre of the Absurd

"*The Zoo Story*", a play in which there is no zoo! It depicts a world which doesn't make a sense. Human beings always want to find a meaning for their lives. They all want to know what happened at the zoo, but they soon will understand the absurdity of their lives and will get disappointed. This is the theatre of the absurd!

The Title

As Jerry tells Peter in the story: *"You're an animal too."* , it shows a side of human which is not controlled by himself. It is the animal part of human beings. It's like that we all live in a zoo all together. Jerry fights with the dog just like he fights with other people. He communicates with the dog as well as he tries to communicate with Peter.

"If you can't deal with people, you have to make a start somewhere. With animals!"

This part of the play made me think about zoophilism but as the story goes on the main ideas and the key themes will be gradually revealed.

Themes:

Isolation, loneliness, miscommunication, intimacy, Sexual Identity, homosexuality, social class, and absurdism

Intimacy is not just about friendship – it requires a fundamental sense of understanding and compassion between two people. This kind of intimacy does not necessarily need to be accumulated over time. Albee believes that it can be achieved simply by approaching a stranger like Peter and getting know somebody. many critics interpret the play as an allegory about the repression of taboo sexual desires. Albee himself is a gay, and critics consider Jerry's loneliness – and desperate fumbling for intimacy with a male stranger – to be representative of the gay male experience in 1958. There are also erotic undertones to Peter and Jerry's interaction, even when sex is not being discussed explicitly. For example, many critics have pointed out the phallic resonance of Jerry's death, which occurs through a knife-wound in the abdomen.

This phallic symbol at the end, refers to Freud ideas and by considering his ideas you can say The knife that Peter wields and Jerry falls upon can be seen as a symbol of a p-e-n-i-s.

The use of the knife isn't just about potency, though. It's also about sex. Jerry tells Peter he's a homosexual. And tickling Peter, can be seen as a kind of courtship or love affair. In some ways, the last scene makes more sense as sex than as murder. Jerry is, after all, happy after he's stabbed, and feels that he's connected with Peter in a new and wonderful way. Peter is horrified. But he might well be horrified after sex too, since he's married and thinks of himself as heterosexual.

Symbolism:

Knife : phallic symbol

Bench: There is only one thing on the stage, and that's the bench. Peter who has a good job and a lovable family, enjoys his life happily.

"I sit on this bench almost every Sunday afternoon, in good weather. It's secluded here; there's never anyone sitting here, so I have it all to myself. "

And when Jerry says: *"You have everything, and now you want this bench. Are these the things men fight for?"*

The bench is a symbol of pride and all thing one has. If they can take your bench, what will they take next? Your pets? Your home, your spouse, your job?

Dog: The dog attacks Jerry, Jerry tries to poison him. It's a black monster. It symbolizes some sort of existential about the horror of humanity and the cruelty of life.

Zoo:

The zoo symbolizes the fact that the zoo is not the zoo. That's how the Theater of the Absurd rolls. The day is nice, the sun is warm, all is well with the world. The setting is meant to be all nice and quiet and comfortable to contrast with the dirty, messy unpleasantness and absurdity of existence.

Climax (Turning Point)

The big, climactic, exciting moment of no return occurs late in the play, when Jerry tries to put Peter off the bench. Worse leads to worse, and Jerry ends up killing himself. That's really the only point where you could say anything actually happens, action-wise. It is sudden and final, though.

Ending:

At the end of the story, Peter screams "Oh my God". And then Jerry imitates him. "Oh...my...God," and then he dies.

It's so **IRONIC** here! You see that as Jerry mocking Peter and making fun of his meaningless references to a religion he probably doesn't really believe. The story is not a religious sort of play. The zoo is a place against the idea of holly God who is said to be flawless.

"JERRY: [His eyes still closed, he shakes his head and speak; a combination of scornful mimicry and supplication] Oh ... my ... God. [He is dead.] "

this last lines of the play, shows that how Jerry wanted to be like Peter but he couldn't make it work. And he died at last after his absurd life.

Sources:

1. the Zoo Story by Edward Albee
 2. The zoo story analysis via Shmoop.com
 3. Theatre of the absurd by Martin Esslin
 4. The zoo story by Edward Albee via gradesaver.com
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Michael says

Succinct but surreal, *The Zoo Story* stages a lurid confrontation between two strangers, after the men's attempt at communication and understanding goes awry. Albee's one-act debut takes place within the boundaries of a single section of a public park, nearby a bench that centers the action of the drama; its dialogue is suggestive and evasive rather than clear and direct, and the characters, though certainly not everymans, read as social types. Subtext swirls underneath the surface of the play as the characters' converse about this and that. Only at one point, when one of the men literally spells out that he was a homosexual for ten days, does the play (almost) make explicit that which it repeatedly implies—the audience is watching a seduction. When the clean-cut character starts to back away from the encounter, though, the play takes a violent turn that ends in the stabbing of the self-described former homosexual.

Macha Marvillet says

Still shocked. Best written play. Jerry is phenomenal.

Sookie says

No one writes loneliness better than Edward Albee. The underlying themes of alienation, sexual identity, belonging all culminates to an ending that neither of the two characters see it coming. Albee works around symbolism and an undercurrent of stagnation that people end up in during their lifetimes. An excellent play that plays out exactly how its written and its interpretation lies in its words than in setting.

James says

Book Review

4 out of 5 stars to *The Zoo Story*, written in 1959 by Edward Albee. If you haven't read this story, you've

missed out on something intense and truly spellbinding. It's a classic American play staged on Broadway (and other places), but so few have probably read it these days. The story is amazing and not what anyone would expect from the title, of even in general. Two men sit on a bench in Central Park. Uppity business man taking a break from his day. A man approaches, appears a bit like a vagabond. He wants to talk. The business man wants to ignore him. The vagabond asks useless and painful questions. The business man wants to walk away, but the vagabond tickles him. A fight ensues. Something bad happens. One man runs away. The other reflects on what he's learned.

What a commentary on society. Forget age, gender, race or class. It's a story about how different personalities handle conflict or friendship. Do you get close or stay distant? Do you listen or talk? Do you ignore or immerse? And when something bad happens, what kind of character do you have? Do you stay or go? Do you deny or admit? All the choices we make in life. Wrapped up into a little old play so many of us haven't actually read or seen.

So what are you waiting for? Sure, it's not a suspense novel (which I love). It's not a page-turning thriller (which I love). But the dialog is on point. And it should be read. So go now.

About Me

For those new to me or my reviews... here's the scoop: I read A LOT. I write A LOT. And now I blog A LOT. First the book review goes on Goodreads, and then I send it on over to my WordPress blog at <https://thisismytruthnow.com>, where you'll also find TV & Film reviews, the revealing and introspective 365 Daily Challenge and lots of blogging about places I've visited all over the world. And you can find all my social media profiles to get the details on the who/what/when/where and my pictures. Leave a comment and let me know what you think. Vote in the poll and ratings. Thanks for stopping by.

Esra says

I had to read this play for my Drama class this semester.

I think this play is going to be my favorite. If you would ask me if I was going to like absurd theatre, I probably would have thought no, though I wouldn't have actually said it before reading it. LOL. I've been going to a few plays in the last couple of weeks and I would love to experience an absurd play in the theatre. Preferably, this one!

We have two characters on a nice day in New York's Central Park. And Jerry randomly is going to tell a random guy at the bench about what happened during his zoo visit. That's how it starts anyways. I'm not going to go into much detail because the play itself is quite short, so go read it! I loved both characters, I could see a little bit of myself in both of them. One has fit in, in this society, living life by the rules. Not poking in life's mysteries and meaning and why there is marriage and why people have to buy houses and cars etc. And Jerry, is exactly the opposite.

Now there are many interpretations on their relation to each other. And something interesting is going on in the play with the number two. And yes, one can talk three hours on a short, one act play like this one and still feel the need to talk more because somehow you are not satisfied and want to dig deeper and talk more about how these two can be doppelgänger and etc etc etc etc. You know what I mean? Please, do.

Anyway, the ending was good. I liked it. And one can find many different interpretations on the ending too. I

really feel for Jerry. I really loved him as a character. And I can see how people think that they are both the same person. And I'm becoming one of them too. Because it really is a character I think a lot of people have in them. But it's better to shut Jerry out because that's how we can survive in this society. Yay!!

So, anyways, what happened at the zoo?

Pooya Kiani says

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Jenna says

Read for my American Lit class.

This is a thought-provoking absurdist one-act play that I just did not "get" during my first pass. I was looking at it a little too simplistically. I wasn't prepared for that ending. I wasn't prepared for any of it. But now that it's in my consciousness, I'm not sure I'll be able to get any of it out of my head ever again.
