1.1 Background of the Analysis

Literature is identical with the words: the expression of human feeling, imaginative process, and creativity (Wellek, 1971: 2) Literature is said to express human feeling because of its powerful meaning which conveys human sense, thoughts, feeling in order to share ideas and experiences. Literature is made to express and communicate the feeling of the artist through imagination in imaginative process which needs creativity. Every artist shares the same process to make literary works, but they have such different way to express and communicate their ideas and feeling to the audience. For example, the author communicates his ideas through words, while the painter may express his feeling through his painting.

According to Wellek and Warren in their book *Theory of Literature* (1977:15) “Literature is said to be creative, an art, what an author has produced.” This statement explains explicitly that literature is something which needs creativity and creative process so that the result would be an art, creative things. Meanwhile, Taylor in his book *Understanding the Element of Literature* (1981:13) states that “Literature is often said to be school of life in that authors tend to comment on the conduct of the society and of individuals in society.” This definition seemingly tends to view literature from its nature in case of the relationship between individual and society. Individual and society, doubtlessly, are material which has two sides, so they can not be separated. Individual learns
from society and society itself is established by individuals. According to Taylor’s
definition above, literature can be said as the medium to comment about the
conduct of society and also the conduct of individuals in society.

Furthermore, literature has three major generic divisions, i.e. poetry,
narrative fiction and also drama. Poetry is a sort of literature which has fewest
lines and it is said to be the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. Narrative
fiction is a sort of literature that belongs to prose (novel, short story etc.) and it
refers to a work that telling something imaginatively based on unreal story. And
then the last is drama; drama based on Webster New Ninth Collegiate Dictionary
is a composition in verse or prose intended to portray life or character or to tell a
story usually involving conflicts and emotions through action and dialogue and
typically designed for theatrical performance.

Drama as well as theatre has many genres that can be distinguished one to
another. One of them is the Theatre of the Absurd. The terminology of the Theatre
of the Absurd is a term coined by Martin Esslin, a critic; who made that
terminology as the title of his book in 1961. This term is intended to point out the
phenomenon of particular type of drama which became popular during post World
War II (1950s and 1960s). At that time, Esslin caught a phenomenon of a
tendency of many dramatists who rejected realism in theatre. He portrays the
turning point of many dramatists who state that the usage of the traditional art
forms and standards is no longer possible because it has already lost its validity.
Thus, Esslin categorizes those dramatists as ‘absurdist’, dramatist who makes an
absurd play.
One of absurdist playwrights and probably the most controversial one is Samuel Beckett. Samuel Beckett is said to be the controversial playwright because of his extraordinary manner in expressing his idea through his drama, *Waiting for Godot*. Samuel Beckett makes *Waiting for Godot* as the violation of the conventional drama and as the direction of expressionism and surrealism experiment in drama and theatre. He became one of the pioneers of absurdist playwrights beside Eugene Ionesco and Jean Genet.

Martin Esslin in his book *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961: xviii) states that “Absurd originally means ‘out of harmony’, in a musical context. Hence its dictionary definition: “out of harmony with reason or propriety; incongruous, unreasonable, illogical”. This statement indicates that ‘absurd’ deals with something which out of harmony, out of context and beyond the limit. Absurd serves unconventional perspectives which can lead to nowhere and meaningless. Every single thing in ‘absurd’ is illogical and yet unreasonable, so it will remain big question mark and many interpretation all the time.

*Waiting for Godot* is a play which evokes much criticism and interpretation from its unconventional style and characteristics which serves absurdity. *Waiting for Godot* considered as the violation of the conventions of realism in drama because of refusing to create the images of human being who acts plausible behavior in familiar scenes within the appropriate and chronological time. *Waiting for Godot* serves absurdity within its theme, plot, characterization, setting and it is specified in the dialogue throughout the play. From its theme as well as reflected by the plot, serves uncertain arrangement of events and there is no identifiable beginning, middle, and end. From its characterization, the lack of
detailed information about the characters: Vladimir, Estragon, Pozzo, Lucky, and the boy exemplifies that the characterization do not coalesce into a unified representation of human behavior and it does mean absurdity. Setting, also serves absurdity because of its abnormal condition and atmosphere, we can see that throughout the play that there is no clue or hint that can point out the location of the whole act except the author just states that two men are waiting on the country road by a skeletal tree (Act 1, p.9) and that Estragon sits on a low mound (Act 1, p.9). Last, the dialogue specifically contains absurdity, we can see it throughout the play that Estragon and Vladimir talk incoherently and in the middle of the play (act 1, p.p 42-45) Lucky conveys his speech grotesquely and incoherently.

Since *Waiting for Godot* serves absurdity, so the way to approach it is by using the characteristics of the Theatre of the Absurd by Martin Esslin; those characteristics encompassing plotless, no recognizable characters, the theme is never fully explained or resolved, reflects dreams and nightmares and also serves incoherent and incomprehension dialogue (Esslin, 1961: XVII). Assuming that every absurd play shares the same characteristics of the Theatre of the Absurd, I wonder whether those characteristics above really exist in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*. Thus, I will analyze Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* based on its ideas and theme which is reflected in the situation of plot, characters, setting, and also its dialogue in order to prove that this play truly reflects the characteristics of the Theatre of the Absurd.
1.2 Problem of the Analysis

Fundamentally, research and scientific inquiry are intended to answer some question in life in order to improve and enrich our knowledge. Referring to this statement, my curiosity about drama deals with the Theatre of the Absurd and Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* leads me to some questions, they are:

1. How are the characteristics of the Theatre of the Absurd described as the element of absurdity in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* through the plot, characterization, setting and also dialogue?
2. Which characteristics appear as the most significant elements in the Theatre of the Absurd found in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*?

1.3 Objective of the Analysis

In line with the problem above, this thesis tries to find out the answers of those questions, they are:

1. To find out how the characteristics of the Theatre of the Absurd described through the plot, theme, characterization, and setting and also dialogue as the element of absurdity in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*.
2. To uncover which characteristics appear as the most significant elements in the Theatre of the Absurd found in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*.

1.4 Scope of the Analysis

To prevent vagueness and subjectivity, it is important to make such limitations in order to get objective result and make such comprehensive analysis.
Since this play is the absurd one so the analysis may involve and focus on the literary elements that implicitly show the characteristics of the Theatre of the Absurd. However, not all elements may analyze in this thesis; I limit the analysis on the elements such as the theme which is reflected in its plot, characterization, and setting. This thesis will also analyze the form of this play in case of its dialogue.

1.5 Significance of the Analysis

The significances of this analysis, they are as follow:

1. Helps people who are interested in learning drama to understand the ideas, perspectives and characteristics of the Theatre of the Absurd as a trend and phenomenon in 1950s – 1960s.

2. Enriches the study of literature generally, and the study of drama and theatre specifically in term of new genre of drama in 1950s – 1960s.

1.6 Method of the Analysis

In accomplishing this thesis, I use intrinsic approach and also apply descriptive analytical method which combined with interpretation. Intrinsic approach is one of two approaches in literature proposed by Wellek and Warren which focusing the analysis on the text itself without having any relationship with other disciplines, while descriptive analytical method is conducted by describing and analyzing the data which come from the text of play that I have selected and then quote it; and within the same time I try to give explanation and interpretation. Interpretation deals with clarifying the meaning of the play by analyzing its form and also its content.
The procedures of this research are: First, I read Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* carefully and then I select and quote some text and dialogue which related with the characteristics of the Theatre of the Absurd as the data; Second, I analyze the text supported by secondary sources (book, journal, material from internet), and; Third, I interpret the text that I have analyzed.

The primary source of my analysis is the play itself. I use Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* which published in 1954 while the secondary source is the books that contain the statement about the Theatre of the Absurd and its relationship with Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*. The theory and statement that encourage me to choose the title ‘**Characteristics of the Theatre of the Absurd in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot***’ comes from the book by Martin Esslin entitled *The Theatre of the Absurd* in 1961. This book influences me profoundly in case of doing my analysis because it gives me framework of research to carry on my analysis deals with the new genre of drama in 1950s-1960s, the Theatre of the Absurd.

1.7 Review of Related Literature

In writing this thesis, I need to concern and traces back the preceding research about absurdity in drama and theatre that substantially relates to the topic I dealt with, the Theatre of the Absurd and Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*.

A century before Albert Camus’ notion about absurdity, Danish Philosopher Soren Kierkegaard wrote extensively on the absurdity of the world. In his journal in 1849, Kierkegaard (in Dru, Alexander. 1938. *The journals of Soren Kierkegaard*. Oxford University Press as quoted by wikipedia.com) states:

“What is the Absurd? It is, as may quite easily be seen, that I, a rational being, must act in a case where my reason, my powers on
reflection, tell me: you can just as well do the one thing as the other, that is to say where my reason and reflection say: you cannot act and yet here is where I have to act… The Absurd, or to act by virtue of the absurd, is to act upon faith… I must act, but reflection has closed the road so I take one of the possibilities and say: This is what I do otherwise because I am brought to a standstill by my powers of reflection.”

From that quotation above, we can see that the terminology of the absurd is not the new term even though its relation and application with drama and theatre are significantly introduced by the works of Beckett, Adamov, Ionesco, Pinter and Genet; and Camus through his essay seemingly has provoked these playwrights.

Albert Camus’ essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* in 1942 became the first philosophy which articulates the present of terminology the *Theatre of the Absurd*. In this essay Camus tries to diagnose human condition and then he concludes that human condition is basically meaningless.

Camus (in Esslin, 1961: xix) states that:

“A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty, is a familiar world. But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of absurdity.”(Taken from Camus, 1942:18)

In the quotation above, Camus concludes that humanity have to resign itself in recognizing that a fully satisfying rational explanation of the universe is beyond its reach; in that sense, the world must ultimately be seen as absurd, in other words Camus emphasizes on man’s absurd hope and on the absurd insignificance of man.

Ionesco (in Esslin, 1961: xix) defines the terminology of absurd as follows:
“Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose... cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, and useless.”

As well as those statements from Camus and Ionesco, Esslin tries to categorize the dramatist who has same perception and ideas deal with human condition that tends to be meaningless as ‘absurdist’. Through his book entitled The Theatre of the Absurd (1961) he states that he finds same basic principal, perception, and ideas of most dramatists in the post-World War II in viewing the world and indeed they express it in their works. He states that:

“... sense of metaphysical anguish at the absurdity of human condition is, broadly speaking, the theme of the plays of Beckett, Adamov, Ionesco, Genet and other writers ... A similar sense of senselessness of life, of the inevitable devaluations of ideals, purity, and purpose, is also the theme of much the work of dramatists like Giraudoux, Anouilh, Salacrou, Satre and Camus itself.” (Esslin, 1961: xix)

Thus, referring to those statements above, I would like to support the statements and findings by Martin Esslin. I will analyze Samuel Beckett’s Waiting for Godot in order to prove that this play has same characteristics with other absurdist’s works at that time based on Esslin category.