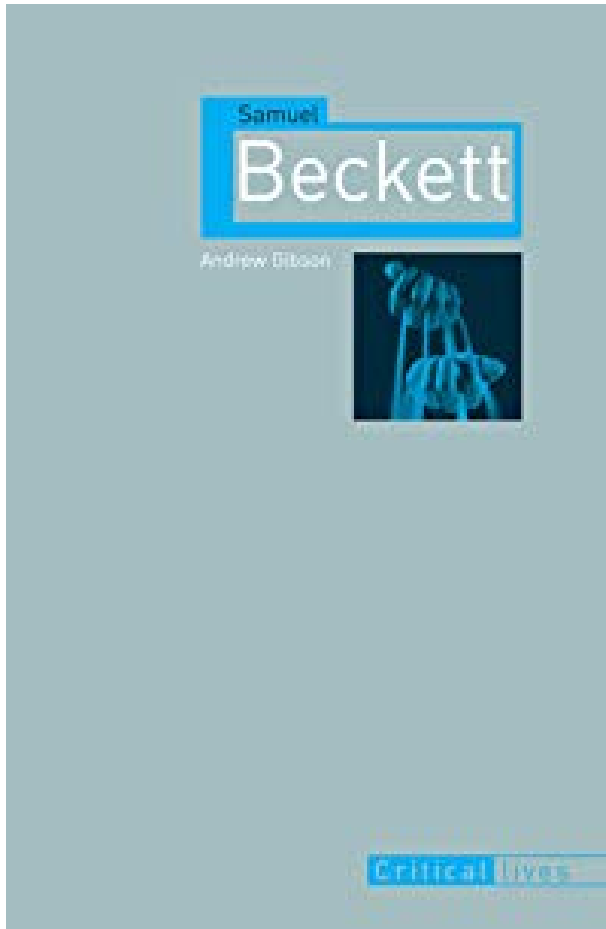


# Samuel Beckett



<b>ISBN13:</b>	9781861895172
<b>Genre:</b>	Biography
<b>Published:</b>	November 1st 2009 by Reaktion Books
<b>Pages:</b>	192
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>ISBN10:</b>	1861895178
<b>Author:</b>	Andrew Gibson
<b>Goodreads Rating:</b>	3.67

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Writer Samuel Beckett (1906–89) is known for depicting a world of abject misery, failure, and absurdity in his many plays, novels, short stories, and poetry. Yet the despair in his work is never absolute, instead it is intertwined with black humor and an indomitable will to endure—characteristics best embodied by his most famous characters, Vladimir and Estragon, in the play *Waiting for Godot*. Beckett himself was a supremely modern, minimalist writer who deeply distrusted biographies and resisted letting himself be pigeonholed by easy interpretation or single definition. Andrew Gibson’s accessible critical biography overcomes Beckett’s reticence and carefully considers the writer’s work in relation to the historical circumstances of his life.

In *Samuel Beckett*, Gibson tracks Beckett from Ireland after independence to Paris in the late 1920s, from London in the ’30s to Nazi Germany and Vichy France, and finally through the cold war to the fall of communism in the late ’80s. Gibson narrates the progression of Beckett’s life as a writer—from a student in Ireland to the 1969 Nobel Prize winner for literature—through chapters that examine individual historical events and the works that grew out of those experiences.

A notoriously private figure, Beckett sought refuge from life in his work, where he expressed his disdain for the suffering and unnecessary absurdity of much that he witnessed. This concise and engaging biography

provides an essential understanding of Beckett's work in response to many of the most significant events of the past century.