

# The Zoo Story

*A Play by Edward Albee*

- 1- First play of Edward Albee
- 2- Written in 1958 and completed in just three weeks
- 3- First Performed at Berlin, Germany in 1959
- 4- Major themes - Isolation
  - Loneliness
  - Miscommunication
  - Social Disparity
  - Dehumanization in a materialistic world
- 5- Major Characters - Peter
  - Jerry

## Brief Summary

- ❖ All of the action of *The Zoo Story* takes place on a **Sunday afternoon** on a bench in **New York City's Central Park**.
- ❖ **Publishing executive Peter** is an upper middle class man with a wife, two daughters, and two cats. He is in his forties and sits on the bench reading a book.
- ❖ Another man, **Jerry, a few years younger and dressed in a sloppy manner**, joins Peter and tells him that he has just come from the Central Park Zoo.
- ❖ Peter does not offer a response but *Jerry persists* in trying to start a conversation. *He is lonely and desperate for a connection with another person.*
- ❖ Jerry quickly becomes an annoyance, with his boisterous personality and his disruption of Peter's quiet time. He rambles on, telling Peter that

smoking will cause him cancer and suggests that having cats rather than dogs is a sign of being effeminate.

- ❖ *Jerry continues to probe Peter* for information about his life and interests. **Eventually Peter engages in conversation** with Jerry and begins to learn about the stranger's life.
- ❖ *Jerry lives a lowly life in a run-down apartment in an Upper West Side flophouse.* He talks of the worthless items that make up his belongings, among them a pair of empty picture frames which Peter inquires about.
- ❖ *Jerry tells him he is totally alone* in the world. He was young when his *parents died* and he has had *only one romantic relationship* that had any meaning for him. That was a *brief affair with another boy in his teens*.
- ❖ Jerry then says he will tell Peter about his visit to the zoo, but his conversation goes in another direction.
- ❖ Jerry begins talking to Peter about *his landlady*. She is always drunk and frequently propositions Jerry. At one point, the landlady acquired a dog which Jerry attempted to befriend, but which attacked him.
- ❖ When his continued attempts to befriend the dog were all rejected, Jerry decided to kill the animal by giving it poisoned hamburger meat. While this made the dog sick, it did not kill it and Jerry decided to just avoid it thereafter.
- ❖ ***Peter is perplexed and disturbed*** as he wonders why Jerry would tell him such a story. Jerry tells him that he uses people's pets as a way to try to start friendships with other people.
- ❖ *Peter politely tries to leave* and *Jerry tickles him in an attempt to prevent* him from doing so. He then *tries to force Peter to move from the bench* and punches him.
- ❖ Peter is aware that Jerry's conduct is irrational, but for some reason finds himself feeling possessive of the bench that was "his" before Jerry arrived.

- ❖ Jerry pulls out a knife and says that the two of them should fight. Peter is surprised by this and refuses. *Jerry then gives the knife to Peter who holds it as if protecting himself.*
- ❖ Upon seeing this *Jerry runs at Peter and into the knife.* Jerry loses control at this point but then becomes calm and he accepts that death is upon him.
- ❖ *He thanks Peter and as his life leaves him, he wipes Peter's fingerprints from the knife to prevent him being accused of murder.*
- ❖ Before anyone might pass by and see the dying Jerry, Peter retrieves his book and leaves.

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WEB SOURCES-- 1.. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Zoo\\_Story](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Zoo_Story)

2.. <http://www.supersummary.com/the-zoo-story/summary/>