

Albert Camus



A French philosopher, author, dramatist, and journalist. In his debut novel 'The Outsider' (1942) Camus explored absurdity, this is a concept that he uses in his writing and is at the heart of his treatment of questions about the meaning of life. Throughout his work, he addresses topics ranging from alienation (we see this with Meursault feeling alienated from society) to the inadequacy of traditional values.

Plot

Meursault, the protagonist of the novel The Stranger by Albert Camus, goes through life as a French man in colonial Algeria feeling isolated and detached from the people and events around him. He murders an Arab man without having a real motive for doing so, yet refuses to show remorse or believe that his soul can be judged. He accepts his death sentence with as much indifference as he feels the world has shown him. - Study.com | Summary, Themes, and Analysis of "The Stranger" by Albert Camus.

About the 'The Outsider'

This is a translated text (French) that offers two titles 'The Outsider' and 'The Stranger'. The use of Outsider implies that the protagonist is known but is considered odd, whereas the use of Stranger implies that no one knows him. Set in 1940's Algiers, the capital of Algeria. Algeria was a colony of France. Algiers would have been predominantly by a minority of French colonists.

This book is a novella

Relationships

Characters	Relationship
Salamano and his dog	Abusive, fearful and hateful
Meursault and his Mother	Detached
Marie and Meursault	Mutual
Raymond and Girlfriend	Toxic, sexually charged, and calculated

Why does Camus present relationships that are tainted by death, guilt and violence.

<https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-details-symbolism-meaning-salamanos-dog-novel-214699>

Characters

Meursault - The protagonist and narrator



Characters (cont)

- Atheist/Nihilist

- Alienated from society

Marie

- Lively and fun-loving

- Emotionally vulnerable

- Wants to marry Meursault

- Conventional feelings

- Values companionship, marriage and loyalty

Raymond

- Macho

- Passionate emotions

- Tough guy values

- Hot temper

- Warehouseman - Crook/Ganster

Maman

- Meursault's mother

- Her death impels the action of the story

- Represents social value placed on motherhood

Magistrate

- Questions Meursault after the shooting of the Arab

- Holds Christian values

The Afterward: By Albert Camus

A long time ago, I summed up *The Outsider* in a sentence I realise is extremely paradoxical: 'In our society any man who doesn't cry at his mother's funeral is liable to be condemned to death.' I simply meant that the hero of the book is condemned because he doesn't play the game. In this sense, he is an outsider to the society in which he lives, wandering on the fringe, on the outskirts of life, solitary and sensual. And for that reason, some readers have been tempted to regard him as a reject. But to get a more accurate picture of his character, or rather one which conforms more closely to his author's intentions, you must ask yourself in what way Meursault doesn't play the game. The answer is simple: he refuses to lie. Lying is not saying what isn't true. It is also, in fact, especially saying more than is true and, in the case of the human heart, saying more than one feels. We all do it, every day, to make life simpler. But, contrary to appearances, Meursault doesn't want to make life simpler. He says what he is, he refuses to hide his feelings and society immediately feels threatened. For example, he is asked to say that he regrets his crime, in a time-honoured fashion. He replies that he feels more annoyance about it than true regret. And it is this nuance that condemns him.. So for me Meursault is not a reject, but a poor and naked man, in love with a sun which leaves no shadows. Far from lacking all sensibility, he is driven by a tenacious and therefore profound passion, the passion for an absolute and for truth. The truth is as yet a negative one, a truth born of living and feeling, but without which no triumph over the self or over the world will ever be possible.



The Afterward: By Albert Camus (cont)

So one wouldn't be far wrong in seeing *The Outsider* as the story of a man who, without any heroic pretensions, agrees to die for the truth. I also once said, and again paradoxically, that I tried to make my character represent the only Christ that we deserve. It will be understood, after these explanations, that I said it without any intention of blasphemy but simply with the somewhat ironic affection that an artist has a right to feel towards the characters he has created.

Questions to consider

1. How do we want Meursault to feel about Marie
2. Is Meursault happy in Algiers?
3. How does Meursault's life create discomfort for us?
4. Why does Camus present relationships that are tainted by death, guilt and violence?
5. What is Camus saying about the world, through the relationships he depicts in the texts?
6. 'The Sun' - Why is it the perfect day?
7. After the murder, how is Meursault incriminating himself further?
8. Why is the lawyer frustrated with Meursault?
9. Why does Meursault persist with his honesty (link to absurdism)?
10. How far are our societies based upon religious values?
11. Are our laws based upon religious doctrines?
12. In prison Meursault says 'You end up getting used to everything', is this true?
13. Who is the real Meursault? Does he care about others? Does his commitment to the truth outweigh his care for others?
14. Why does Meursault wish to be greeted with 'cries of hatred'?
15. Why do we cling to 'cause and effect' in our lives?

Themes	At a Vigil
- Isolation	Expected Behaviours
- Relationships	- Viewing the body
- Meaningless existence	- Silence
- Ceremony	- Thinking of memories of the deceased
- The Sun	- Feeling sad
- Race	
- Justice	Meursault: Not involved in the vigil process, very self-involved. He is completely neglecting the religious process. Not acknowledging his mother's life as sacred.
- Heroism	
- Death	
- Existentialism	
- Absurdism	

Motifs
- Death and Decay
- Watching and Observation
- Sensitivity and Discomfort

Symbols
- The Courtroom
- The Crucifix
- The Sun

Unconventional Behaviours of Meursault
- Disrespectful at his mother's funeral
- Sleeps with a woman and then forgets about her and moves on to complain how he hates sundays.

