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#### SYNOPSIS

**Part I, Chap. 1** On a Thursday in July, Meursault, the tersely-spoken, enigmatic narrator, states: "Maman died today. Or yesterday maybe, I don't know." In his thirties, Meursault, a clerk in a shipping office on the North African coast and sole support of his mother, had shared his apartment with her until three years before. Because of his modest income, he had to place her in a retirement home outside the village of Marengo, eighty kilometers from Algiers, so that she could be near friends and receive better care. During the past year, he visited her infrequently because of the inconvenience of the two-hour bus ride there and back. He recalls that she cried for a few days, but acclimated within months. He is uncertain about her age.

Mechanically, he requests leave on Thursday and Friday from his employer to attend the funeral. Céleste, the restaurant owner, expresses sympathy. Before the bus leaves, Meursault hurries to borrow black tie and armband from Emmanuel. In Marengo, he walks two kilometers to the home. The caretaker expresses shock that he does not want to view his mother's corpse in the mortuary. Meursault withstands the customary condolences, the intrusion of the elderly caretaker and nurse, and the night-long vigil among Madame Meursault's ten aged friends, one of whom weeps for Madame Meursault, her only friend. To relieve his fatigue and aching back, he drinks coffee with milk and smokes with the caretaker.

Meursault dozes through the night and awakens with a backache at dawn on Friday. After shaking hands with the mourners, Meursault washes, signs some papers, and readies himself for the sun-baked funeral procession. He speaks little and neither displays nor experiences grief. Thomas Pérez, an aged friend of Madame Meursault, requests a place in the funeral procession. A priest and two altar boys, pallbearers, the nurse and director, and Meursault walk to the village with the hearse. The searing heat overwhelms them, causing Pérez to faint. Meursault looks forward to the bus ride back to Algiers and to twelve hours' sleep.

**Chap. 2** By chance the following Saturday morning at the beach, Meursault meets Marie Cardona, a former typist in his office with whom he had experienced a brief mutual flirtation. They swim together and, after a Fernandel film in the evening, go back to Meursault's one-room flat to make love and sleep. He lies in bed smoking cigarettes until noon because he dislikes Sundays and because he wants to avoid questions at the restaurant. The rest of the day, he sits astraddle of a chair on his balcony opposite the main street and observes neighbors and moviegoers. At five o'clock, the streetcar delivers fans and players of a victorious soccer team. He buys bread and cooks spaghetti. He concludes that nothing has really changed.

**Chap. 3** Monday reinstates the comfortable routine of freight invoices at his desk. He and Emmanuel, the dispatcher, leave for lunch and hop a truck to Céleste's restaurant. After a rest, Meursault hurries back to the office. At regular intervals, the loud and abusive curses of his neighbor, Salamano, interrupt

Meursault's solitude. Twice daily for eight years, the old widower and his mangy spaniel walk the Rue de Lyon. Regularly, to the dismay of passersby, the old man abuses the aged dog.

In the evening, Meursault's other neighbor, the flashy, swaggering pimp Raymond Sints, invites him to share blood sausage and wine. Meursault, groggy with drink, listens to his story about how he abused his cheating Moorish mistress. At Raymond's request, Meursault writes a letter enticing the girl back. He knows that Raymond intends to punish her more thoroughly for infidelity.

**Chap. 4** Meursault works out the week, taking time twice to attend movies with Emmanuel. Meursault swims with Marie on Saturday; they spend the night together. When violence breaks out in the hall around lunchtime, they observe a police officer questioning Raymond and his mistress. Marie leaves at 1:00 P. M. Two hours later, Raymond tells how he carried out his plan. Salamano describes an outing to the Parade Ground, where the spaniel escaped his loose collar and disappeared. Through the wall that night, Meursault hears Salamano pacing and weeping.

**Chap. 5** The next day, Raymond calls Meursault at the office and invites him and Marie to a friend's beach house near Algiers on Sunday. A group of Arabs had been following Raymond. After rejecting the boss's offer of a transfer to the new Paris office, Meursault half-heartedly agrees to marry Marie even though he doesn't love her. At dinner, he shares a table with a robotic old woman and returns to his room, where Salamano still worries over his lost dog. The old man reveals that neighbors criticized Meursault for putting his mother in a home.

**Chap. 6** Meursault corroborates Raymond's testimony to the police. They grudgingly let Raymond go. The next day, Meursault and Marie take the bus to the beach with Raymond, who observes Arabs watching him. From the Massons' bungalow, Meursault goes to the beach for a swim and finishes lunch before 11:30. The men return to the beach and encounter two hostile Arabs, one of whom is the Moorish woman's brother. Meursault holds Raymond's pistol while Raymond challenges the Arab man-to-man. The Arab cuts Raymond's hand and mouth. The men return to the bungalow; Raymond and Masson go to find a doctor.

Later, Meursault, restless and uncomfortable, walks behind Raymond in the blinding afternoon sun toward the spring. Again encountering the surly Arabs, the two glare at their attackers. Raymond passes Meursault his pistol. After returning to the bungalow, Meursault walks alone toward the cool spring and the Arab. Glimpsing a flash of light from the man's knife, Meursault instinctively shoots him. After a pause, Meursault fires four more shots into the victim.

**Part II, Chap. 1** The authorities arrest and question Meursault. A week later, the magistrate pursues the questioning and appoints an attorney for Meursault. The attorney is concerned that the accused showed no emotion at his mother's death, but seems confident of a positive outcome to the trial. At another interrogation, the magistrate asks why Meursault paused, then repeatedly shot the victim. He is incapable of giving a satisfactory response and rejects the magistrate's proffered crucifix.

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The magistrate labels him a hardened soul. Eleven months of interrogation ensue.

**Chap. 2** Because Marie is not Meursault's wife, rules permit her to visit only once. To tolerate the boredom and confinement of his one-man cell, he sleeps, reads, and daydreams of common pleasures—women, cigarettes, freedom for a walk on the beach.

**Chap. 3** The trial, covered by the press, begins in the hottest part of June. There are three judges; witnesses include the director and caretaker, Thomas Pérez, Raymond, Masson, Salamano, and Marie. The director of the retirement home gives damaging testimony about the prisoner's seeming indifference to Madame Meursault's death. Meursault perceives the indignation of the court and realizes, for the first time, that he is guilty of a crime.

Céleste tries to address his friend's bad luck. The judge halts his contrived speech. The prosecutor manipulates Marie's testimony to demonstrate Meursault's insensitivity. The prosecutor emphasizes that only a monster would swim, make love, attend a comic movie, and associate with an underworld figure in the days following his mother's death. More favorable testimony passes with little notice. The prosecutor makes a passionate summation that Meursault plotted the Arab's murder.

**Chap. 4** Meursault's lawyer pleads him guilty; the prosecutor accuses him of being remorseless and soulless. Meursault, who has previously refrained from defending himself, cites the sun as the reason for the killing, but spectators laugh at his inarticulate defense. The defense attorney claims that Meursault is a model son. The jury finds him guilty; the judge condemns him to decapitation in the public square.

**Chap. 5** Meursault is at first agitated and refuses to see the chaplain. In his new cell, he contemplates the guillotine. Marie stops writing. The chaplain tries to coerce the prisoner to accept God and an afterlife. Meursault, triggered for the first time to vent his frustration, screams that he is being executed for not weeping at his mother's grave. In the night, he finds peace in the sights and sounds of earth, stars, and salt air and anticipates being less lonely among the screaming spectators who will come to revile him at his execution.

### TIME LINE

- |           |   |      |   |
|-----------|---|------|---|
| 1830      | France begins to colonize Algeria.  | 1945 | Rebellion breaks out in Vietnam after French attempt to reoccupy their colonies.                                    |
| 1913      | Nov. 7 Albert Camus is born.  | 1947 | France grants Algerians French citizenship.   |
| 1914      | Aug. 4 World War I begins.  | 1948 | Jean-Paul Sartre publishes <i>Existentialism and Humanism</i> .<br><i>The Plague</i> is published.                  |
| 1914      | Sept. 6-9 Camus's father dies during the First Battle of the Marne.   | 1951 | <i>The Rebel</i> is published.  |
| 1918      | Nov. 11 World War I ends.   | 1954 | Vietnam wins independence from France.<br>Algerians rebel against French rule.<br>Camus publishes <i>The Fall</i> . |
| 1919      | June Treaty of Versailles formally ends World War I.  | 1957 | Camus wins the Nobel Prize for Literature.  |
| 1935      | Camus founds the Worker's Theater in Algiers.   | 1958 | Charles De Gaulle returns to power.   |
| 1936      | He graduates from the University of Algiers with a degree in literature and philosophy.   | 1960 | Jan. 4 Camus dies in a car crash.   |
| 1937-1938 | He writes book reviews for the <i>Alger-Republicain</i> .   | 1962 | July 3 Algeria gains its freedom from France.   |
| 1943      | Jean-Paul Sartre publishes <i>Nausea</i> , his first existential novel.   | 1976 | <i>The Stranger</i> is filmed.  |
| 1940      | June 13 France surrenders to Nazi Germany.<br>July British warships destroy French fleet in Oran to prevent its capture by Nazis. | 1992 | <i>The Plague</i> is filmed   |
| 1941      | <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i> is published  | 1994 | Camus's daughter publishes <i>The First Man</i> .   |
| 1942-1947 | Camus is editor of <i>Combat</i> .  |      |   |
| 1942      | <i>The Stranger</i> is published.   |      |   |
|           | November Allied troops land in North Africa.  |      |   |
| 1944      | <i>Caligula</i> is published  |      |   |
|           | June 6 Allied troops land in Normandy.  |      |   |
|           | Aug. 25 Free French troops enter Paris.   |      |   |
| 1945      | May 8 Germany surrenders to the Allies.   |      |   |

### AUTHOR'S LIFE AND WORKS

Beset by poverty throughout his youth, Nobel laureate Albert Camus devoted his life to austere, stoic literature that exalts truth, happiness, freedom, and justice. He summed up his philosophy in simple words: "We are made to live for others. But one really dies only for oneself." Born November 7, 1913, in Mondovi, Algiers, to Catherine Sintès, a deaf Spanish domestic, and Lucien Camus, an Alsatian farm worker who died at the first Battle of the Marne in 1914, Camus compensated for his lack of a father by developing a strong attachment to his mother, brother, maternal grandmother, and two uncles. The family lived in a small flat in the working-class section of Oran. Although he received a scholarship, Camus had to work while attending high school. Periodically, he suffered bouts of tuberculosis, which plagued him throughout his life and limited the range of his boyhood activities.

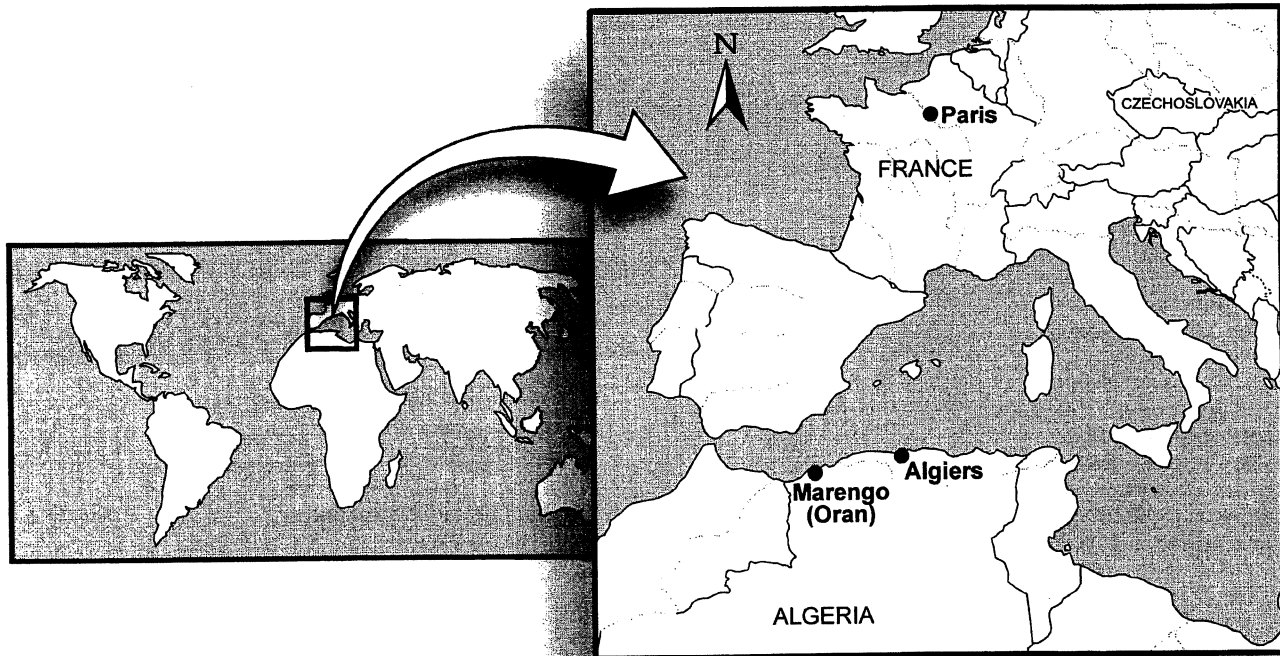
In spite of ill health, Camus worked as a weatherman, police clerk, and stock salesman and excelled in sports, journalism, and drama at the University of Algiers. He graduated in 1936 with a degree in literature and philosophy. The advance of tuberculosis prevented his being drafted into the military. For a time, he managed, acted, and wrote for the Théâtre du Travail and the Théâtre de l'Équipe before turning to journalism as his main interest. His writings in the late thirties championed the cause of poor Arabs, whose lot paralleled his own poverty.

Camus failed at his first marriage to Simone Hie and married Francine Faure in 1940, the mother of twins Jean and Catherine. After extensive travels in Europe, he began writing full-time for *Paris-Soir*, *Alger-Republicain*, *L'Express*, and other journals. He fled the Nazi capture of France in 1940 and returned to Oran to teach in a private school for two years. At first drawn to Communism and Nietzschean nihilism, he resigned his membership in the Communist party, choosing instead to support socialism, which reflected more nearly his humanist perspective.

Camus edited the *Soir-Republicain*, a post which alienated him from his countrymen and cost him his job. Returning to occupied France in 1942, Camus edited the key underground newspaper *Combat* until 1947. During the most treacherous times, he concealed his identity under pseudonyms, including Saltone, Albert Mathe, and Albert Beauchart. He was a cofounder of *Editions Gallimard*, a publishing house he directed from 1943 to 1960. His humanitarian outreach extended to the Committee to Aid Victims of Totalitarian States and to service in the French Resistance. As a moralist and lecturer, he became popular on both sides of the Atlantic.

The North African Mediterranean coastline around Oran

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served as the setting for Camus's most influential works: *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *The Stranger*, and *The Plague*. *The Stranger*, his earliest and perhaps best novel, brought instant fame. Two years later, his allegory, *The Plague*, was acclaimed as a major work because of its appeal to Lost Generation readers. In addition to his popular triad, he wrote dramas; staged adaptations of works by Dostoevsky, Calderon de la Barca, Buzzatti, Larivey, and Faulkner; and published anticolonial criticism and personal essays, a novel, and short stories. Recognition for his courage and expertise include the Medal of Liberation, Prix de la Critique, and Prix Algerian du Roman. In 1957, he became the second youngest writer to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature.

At the height of his career, Camus died in a car crash eighty miles from Paris near Sens, France, on January 4, 1960. Rescue workers extracted from the wreckage 144 nearly illegible handwritten pages of unfinished text and marginal notes for an autobiographical novel, *Le Premier Homme*, which his daughter deciphered and published in 1994. The plaintive honesty of Jacques Cormery, his alter-ego protagonist, expresses youthful yearning:

I tried to discover as a child what was right and wrong since no one around could tell me. And now I recognize that everything abandoned me, that I need someone to show me the way, to blame and praise me...I need my father.

It is not surprising that despite its raw, unpolished state, the novel became an immediate bestseller in France and achieved critical honor in the English version, published in 1995.

### CAMUS AND THE CRITICS

Ensuing years have elevated Camus among the restless, disillusioned speakers for the post-war generation and the impassioned pacifists of the atomic age. A pioneer of anti-Christian existential fiction and guide to a perplexing, irrational human landscape, he became one of the most influential voices

of the twentieth century. His themes center on the search for a sane, controlled political dissent without violence, armed conflict, assassination, or terrorism. Recurrent motifs depict characters who take pleasure in the simplest daily acts of eating and drinking, conversing with friends, and looking out on street scenes or landscape.

Part of Camus's success lies in his lyrical, symbolic narrative. Likewise, his obsession with paradox, irony, and absurdity, particularly as they apply to the setting, result in a remarkably spare text. These qualities link him irrevocably with his contemporary, Jean-Paul Sartre, with whom he broke after writing strong anti-Russian editorials which outraged Marxists. Camus's lean, muscular prose reflects the influence of American journalistic style, especially that of Ernest Hemingway. Some critics decry Camus's rejection of moral, social, and religious standards and label him a godless apostate. Other critics, however, use this very argument to laud his refreshingly straightforward expression of *vivre le plus*, a zest for life based on liberal humanism, optimism, and moral imperative.

A gripping study of senseless murder and its aftermath, Albert Camus's detached examination of a human soul has become a touchstone in the canon of Western humanism. Based on the impersonal anguish that evolved from war-torn Europe, *The Stranger* remains a classic of the questioning, probing, challenging fiction of the Lost Generation. The emergence of affirmation and ethical self-sufficiency expresses Camus's belief that life must be embraced for all its unfairness, moral paradox, and irrationality.

Camus's skill, coupled with an unshakable integrity, allows him to probe the questions that haunt modern humanity. One conclusion—that life is controlled by the absurd—colors his entire canon, particularly *The Stranger*. He recognized the falseness of absolutes such as religion, marriage, personal freedom, and social justice in the face of the human struggle

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against alienation, random violence, and death. Two posthumous films capture the intensity of his writings: *The Stranger* (1976) and *La Peste* (1992).

### OTHER WORKS BY CAMUS

*Betwixt and Between* (1939)  
*Caligula* (1944)  
*Cross Purposes* (1944)  
*Devotion to the Cross* (1953)  
*Essays* (1965)  
*The Exile, and the Kingdom* (1958)  
*Existence* (1945)  
*The Fall* (1956)  
*The First Man* (1996)  
*An Interesting Case* (1955)  
*Happy Death* (1973)  
*The Just Assassins* (1949)  
*Letters to a German Friend* (1945)  
*Lettre a Bernanos* (1963)  
*Lyrical and Critical Essays* (1968)  
*Meditations on Theater and Life* (1961)  
*The Minotaur, or The Stopping at Oran* (1950)  
*The Myth of Sisyphus* (1941)  
*Neither Victims nor Executioners* (1960)  
*Notebooks* (1942-1951, 1964)  
*Now I: Chronicles* (1944-1948, 1958)  
*Nuptials* (1945)  
*The Plague* (1948)  
*The Possessed* (1955)  
*The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt* (1951)  
*Rebellion in the Asturias* (1936)  
*Reflections on the Guillotine* (1957)  
*Requiem for a Nun* (1956)  
*Resistance, Rebellion, and Death* (1961)  
*State of Siege* (1948)  
*Summer* (1954)  
*The Wits* (1953)  
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### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss justice for the poor
2. To describe the physical, mental, and emotional effects of prison
3. To characterize loss of a parent
4. To acknowledge working-class hardships
5. To outline the contrast between ideology and truth
6. To account for violent crime
7. To contrast scenes of violence and contemplation
8. To define existentialism
9. To characterize an anti-hero
10. To cite examples of illogic based on emotion and prejudice
11. To list examples of character amorality or indifference

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To recount how witnesses reveal Meursault's identity in court
2. To order the events that lead to Marie's disappearance from Meursault's life
3. To account for Raymond's kindness
4. To characterize Meursault's life in Algeria
5. To contrast the attitudes of the magistrate and the director
6. To evaluate the relationship of Marie and Meursault
7. To explain the role of heat and climate in the novel
8. To assess the attorney's role in Meursault's condemnation
9. To contrast Meursault's mother and Salamano in terms of need and despair
10. To note the precipitating factors the day of the shooting
11. To contrast Meursault's behavior with the stereotypical mourner
12. To account for the Arab's death
13. To describe changes in Meursault
14. To discuss the significance of the funeral
15. To explain Meursault's outburst at the chaplain
16. To account for a verdict of guilty
17. To study Meursault's solitude
18. To characterize Raymond as an underworld figure
19. To contrast mistreatment of the spaniel and the Moorish woman

### LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

For a better understanding of Albert Camus's style, present the following terms and applications to his novel:

**absurdism** the attempt to cope with nothingness, anxiety, or the malaise that afflicts humanity after the collapse of tradition

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and values. In absurdism, there are no givens, no justice. Doubts about God, patriotism, sanity, and self supplant previous philosophies that assured humankind of purpose, worth, direction, and reward. Meursault's refusal to conform to society's expectations costs him credibility with the court. In his one angry outburst, he declares that his inability to weep for his mother is the sole reason for the court's convicting him of premeditated murder.

**antihero** a nontraditional protagonist or non-hero who demonstrates none of the grace, skill, intelligence, or nobility of the standard hero. Some classic non-heroes include the protagonists of Mary Chase's *Harvey*, Miguel Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, Marsha Norman's *Night Mother*, Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, Thomas Berger's *Little Big Man*, Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, and Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees*. Meursault, the focus of *The Stranger*, blunders haphazardly into a death sentence by refusing to scheme or lie or to present himself as other than what he is. His refusal to mourn his mother and his explanation of how the sun on the sea precipitated the shooting demonstrate his inability to dissemble on the witness stand, even if his statements doom him to decapitation for premeditated murder.

**existentialism** a loosely defined philosophy that contrasts the random nature of the universe with human helplessness and inadequacy of intelligence. The existentialist hero accepts insignificance and creates meaning by rising to the challenge of events and situations. Meursault is exalted to nobility by maintaining his self-respect and facing down a hostile environment that insists on his guilt based on trivial findings from a handful of character witnesses, none of whom saw the crime. Unable to halt an ignoble and undeserved execution by guillotine in the public square, Meursault can only hope for a jeering audience at his decapitation.

**historical milieu** an historic or geographic setting that influences character action or attitudes. The novel reflects the anti-colonialism that permeates Algeria in the decades following World War II. The smoldering hostility in the Arabs who stalk Raymond demonstrates an unspoken anger at the French presence in northern Africa. When Meursault is assigned a cell, he instantly silences Arab inmates by confessing that he killed an Arab. With no explanation, he is reassigned to a one-man cell. These details suggest that much feeling between Arabs and their white overlords goes unexpressed in words or overt rebellion.

**psychological novel** a study of the interior landscape with emphasis on motivation, internal dialogue, and circumstance. *The Stranger* follows Meursault through his mother's funeral, neighborhood scenes, his relationship with Marie, and into the cell and courtroom. Readers can observe his character, values, friendships, and frustrations as he shows no enthusiasm for a transfer to Paris, shoots the Arab at the spring, considers marrying Marie, avoids condolences, and rejects the hostility and loathing of the magistrate and chaplain.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SETTING

The milieu of Camus's stimulating novel characterizes the dead-end lifestyle of people who live outside the social and moral expectations of the majority. Rather than establish families and homes built on mutual trust, men like Raymond and Meursault live day to day, following the rhythms of work and street life. The village where Madame Meursault died suffers such stifling heat that the undertaker hurries the burial process. Meursault undergoes a sleepless night of vigil-keeping and a long walk in the sun to the burial before returning on the bus on a two-hour ride. Outside the apartment is a street alive with comings and goings, travelers on bus and streetcar, and

Céleste's restaurant, one of Meursault's regular getaways. To view the tides of people arriving and departing, he sits backward in a chair and looks out from the balcony.

When the setting shifts to the coast, Meursault allows himself to draw closer to Marie, a woman he offers a slim affection and no commitment. He experiences more extremes of heat and light than he suffered in his apartment. Raymond's seamy lifestyle spills over into Meursault's domain, drawing him into the hostile glares of Arabs who seek retribution for the Moorish woman's ill treatment. In search of respite, ironically, Meursault withdraws into a cool spring atmosphere and a heated return of Arab anger. The explosion of the revolver ends the standoff as well as Meursault's freedom.

From interrogation to airless court room to cell, Meursault experiences the narrowing of atmosphere, which whirls with the ceiling fans and the antagonisms of people who believe him unworthy of pity or clemency. Locked away from Marie, his job, and his apartment, he contemplates the meaning of prison and the fact that he is indeed guilty of a crime. He allows his mind to create the outdoor scene of beheading on the public square, the last setting he will experience before execution.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR SOURCES

#### Novels

Claude Brown, *Manchild in the Promised Land*  
Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*  
Theodore Dreiser, *An American Tragedy*  
Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*  
Ernest Gaines, *A Gathering of Old Men* and *A Lesson Before Dying*  
Charles Portis, *True Grit*  
Alex Haley, *Queen*

#### Plays

Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*  
Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee, *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail*

#### Poetry

Thomas Hardy, "The Man He Killed"  
Randall Jarrell, "The Woman at the Washington Zoo"  
Rudyard Kipling, "Danny Deever"  
Jean-Paul Sartre, "The Wall"  
Richard Wright, "Between the World and Me"

#### Nonfiction

Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*  
Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*  
Mark Mathabane, *Kaffir Boy*  
Richard Wright, *Black Boy*

#### Internet

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"Counseling Services for Families," <http://www.nire.org/famcou63.htm>.  
"Crisis, Grief, and Healing," <http://www.webhealing.com>  
"A Page About Albert Camus,"  
[www.clark.net/pub/samg/camus.html](http://www.clark.net/pub/samg/camus.html).

#### Videos/DVDs

*Dead Man Walking*  
*Driving Miss Daisy*  
*The Green Mile*  
*Les Misérables*  
*Lord Jim*  
*Native Son*  
*Papillon*  
*The Power of One*  
*Flagtime*  
*THX-1138*

## STRANGER

### THEMES AND MOTIFS

A study of the central issues and situations in *The Stranger* should include these aspects:

#### Themes

- loneliness
- isolation
- murder
- injustice
- racism
- family
- testimony
- survival
- condemnation
- acceptance

#### Motifs

- coping with loss of a family member
- seeking escape through friendship
- comprehending the needs of a condemned man
- accepting ill fate
- contradicting a patronizing priest

### MEANING STUDY

Below are significant words, phrases, or sentences from the novel. Explain each in context. Part, chapter, and page numbers pinpoint each entry so that you can re-read the passage in which it appears.

1. That way I can be there for the vigil and come back tomorrow night. (Part I, Chap. 1, p. 3)

*(Meursault plans to keep the customary watch over his aged mother's remains on Thursday evening before her burial on Friday. A vigil, usually observed by friends and relatives of the deceased, often took place in a candlelit parlor. Attendants spent the evening and night reminiscing over their loved one's past life. Visitors lightened the watch with homecooked foods and drink, often alcoholic.)*

*Meursault's vigil, in contrast, bears little resemblance to this custom. At the retirement home mortuary, he sits in an uncomfortable chair beneath the merciless glare of overhead lighting which, like justice, is all or nothing. The meager furniture, sawhorses, and silent Arab nurse add to the sense of alienation that surrounds the vigil. He and the inmates who sit beside Madame Meursault's casket partake in no conversation or simple pleasantries.*

*Only the 64-year-old caretaker shares any intimate thoughts. Ironically, the old man dwells on the need to bury the corpse before the intense heat causes it to decompose. Meursault's only refreshments to lighten the tedium and misery are cigarettes and coffee with milk, which refreshes him. His night's watch ends with the signing of impersonal documents.)*

2. Out in front of the building stood the priest and two altar boys. One of them was holding a censer . . . . The priest, his acolytes, the director and I all went inside. (Part I, Chap. 1, p. 14.)

*(The funeral follows Catholic ceremony. The censer, a perforated holder for burning incense, is a palpable symbol of prayer, which floats mysteriously upward. The acolytes light candles on the altar, symbolizing the light that God gave the universe at creation. Ironically, heat and light carry major significance in the story. Light intensifies over the next days as the July sun reflects off water, sand, and metal. When Meursault fires the pistol, the sunlight glancing off the Arab's knife pierces his vision with waves of pain. Eleven months later, when Meursault tries to express the effect of light on his nerves and vision, unfeeling spectators laugh at him.)*

3. The tar had burst open in the sun. Our feet sank into it, leaving its shiny pulp exposed.

(Part I, Chap. 1, pp.16-17)

*(The inexorable heat touches other elements of the setting. In this image, Meursault, following in procession behind his mother's coffin, feels sucked down into the melting pavement, which symbolizes fate. As the group struggles along, the nurse comments, "If you go slowly, you risk getting sunstroke. But if you go too fast, you work up a sweat and then catch a chill inside the church." Meursault agrees with her and points out, "There was no way out.")*

4. She laughed again and told me there was a Fernandel movie she'd like to see. (Part I, Chap. 2, p. 20)

*(Marie, who has a more spirited outlook than Meursault, replies to his offer of a movie with the suggestion that they see Fernandel, pseudonym of Fernand-Joseph-Désiré Contandin, the pantomimist who won the French Legion of Honor. This popular comedian, who was a contemporary of Albert Camus, was popular for his facial contortions and simple-witted grin. He began as a music-hall entertainer in Nice, advanced to vaudeville and revues, and appeared in movies, both comedy and drama. Most notable among his works is the classic "Le Blanc et le Noir" [The White and the Black], which debuted in 1930. His style compares to the American films and stage comedy of Jerry Lewis.)*

*Later in the novel, the prosecutor uses the nature of Fernandel's movies as a means of proving that Meursault is a callous criminal. The prosecutor summarizes, "Gentlemen of the jury, the day after his mother's death, this man was out swimming, starting up a dubious liaison, and going to the movies, a comedy, for laughs. I have nothing further to say.")*

5. In the little café Chez Pierrot, next door to the tobacconist's, the waiter was sweeping up the sawdust in the deserted restaurant inside. (Part I, Chap. 2, p. 22)

*(During Meursault's Sunday musings on the balcony, he observes the street scene, including the café across the way. Ironically, the establishment takes its name from Pedrolino, the stock character of the Italian Commedia dell'Arte, who is easily recognized onstage as an unsuccessful suitor and butt of his companions' pranks. Dressed in floppy trousers and hat, his face powdered white, Pedrolino or Pierrot, as he is called in France, represents the naive victim who maintains little control over his affairs.)*

*To heighten the significance of the pathetic mime, Camus adds the subtle touch of sawdust, which a sweeper removes from the floor of the empty restaurant. Like the image, Meursault is also dry, sterile, and easily disposed of. Shortly, his case will fall into the hands of a savage audience that bears him no more compassion than do the players who taunt Pierrot.)*

6. First he'd thought of taking her to a hotel and calling the vice squad to cause a scandal and have her listed as a common prostitute. After that he'd looked up some of his underworld friends. (Part I, Chap. 3, p. 31)

*(Raymond Sintés, Meursault's neighbor, represents the cynicism toward justice. Raymond, who probably earns his living from prostitutes, threatens to turn the legal system against the Moorish woman, whom he suspects of infidelity. To punish her for double dealing, he first abuses her, then considers exposing her to the police department that specializes in prosecuting people guilty of immorality. As a choice fillip to his evil plan, he then consorts with fellow criminals to mark her.)*

7. When he told me the woman's name I realized she was

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Moorish (Part I, Chap. 3, p. 32)

*(Raymond's mistress is a member of a black race that claims ancestry with the Mauritians of Roman times. Associated with Islam, Moors have influenced art, fashion, food, architecture, and literature in North Africa, but their clashes with Christianity set them apart as traditional victims of racial slurs and prejudice.)*

8. It was covered with yellowish rocks and the whitest asphodels set against the already hard blue of the sky. (Part I, Chap. 6, p. 49)  
*(Stark symbols of crime mark the setting. Asphodels, delicate white blossoms of the lily family, reflect death and mourning. Homer mentions them in connection with the Underworld, particularly as they relate to the fate of Persephone, queen of the dead. As Marie walks by the asphodels, she makes large, sweeping motions that decapitate the flowers, much as her lover shoots down the Arab and will himself be beheaded in another year.)*
9. Despite the heat (I was in my shirt sleeves), he had on a dark suit, a wing collar, and an odd-looking tie with broad black and white stripes. (Part II, Chap. 1, p. 64)  
*(The callow young lawyer, whom the court appoints to defend Meursault, seems oblivious to the heat. In contrast to his client's relaxed shirt sleeves, the unnamed defender wears a formal outfit befitting attorneys. The colors of his suit and tie suggest a man who deals in the stark black and white of legal justice.)*
10. I'd been struck by this picture because the guillotine looked like such a precision instrument, perfect and gleaming. (Part II, Chap. 5, p. 112)  
*(Like the defense attorney's color combination, the guillotine also reflects the simple black and white of justice. An outgrowth of the French Revolution, the device was named for Joseph Guillotine, a French physician who invented it in the late 1700s as a swift, humane method of meting justice to the guilty. Because Meursault is guilty of premeditated murder, he suffers an extreme form of punishment.*

*During his imprisonment, Meursault awaits execution and contemplates the mechanical aspects involved in decapitation. He at first imagines that the guillotine sits on a platform, but then learns that it is situated at ground level. He thinks, "That bothered me too. Mounting the scaffold, going right up into the sky, was something the imagination could hold on to. Whereas, once again, the machine destroyed everything: you were killed discreetly, with a little shame and with great precision.)*

### COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers with quotations from the novel.

#### Action

1. How does Madame Meursault's death affect her son?  
*(In one respect, Meursault reacts like any dutiful son. He requests two days' leave from his office and takes a bus that afternoon for the retirement home in Marengo, about eighty kilometers from Algiers, where his mother has lived for three years. When he arrives, he asks to see her body, but learns that he must see the director first. He waits, speaks with the director, and then keeps an all-night vigil at the mortuary beside his mother's coffin. The next morning, he walks with the small procession to the village for the church service and burial. Then, from the village, he catches a bus back to Algiers.  
Physically, Meursault responds in a conventional way.*

*He is polite, reserved, but weary from his exertions. His emotional reactions, however, seem unconventional. In spite of the fact that he wonders, upon receiving the death notice, about the exact day she died, he does not ask the director. As narrator, Meursault states that he and his mother never had much to talk about, that they both disdained religion, and that she grew accustomed to the retirement home after several weeks of discontent. His objective, unemotional way of relating data suggests that he reports the death of a stranger.)*

#### Motivation

2. Why does Meursault agree to write a letter for Raymond?  
*(Raymond Sintes, a flashily dressed, somewhat sinister character, lives in Meursault's apartment building. Raymond claims to be a warehouse guard, but rumor declares him a pimp. When he asks Meursault to write a letter luring his estranged mistress back, Meursault accepts. Raymond has explained that he suspected his Moorish mistress of infidelity. He beat her severely and has been formulating new ideas for further retribution. Part of his plan is to produce a letter "with a punch and also some things in it to make her sorry for what she's done." Because he does not feel capable of composing such a letter, he needs Meursault's help.*

*Even though Meursault seems oblivious to Raymond's mistreatment of the mistress, he agrees to write the letter. He explains, "I did it just as it came to me, but I tried my best to please Raymond because I didn't have any reason not to please him." This statement hints at Meursault's aimlessness during the remainder of the first part. He accommodates Raymond without giving thought to the consequence. At best, this is no motive at all; at worst it is blatantly immoral and devoid of logic.)*

#### Theme

3. What is Meursault's attitude toward love?  
*(Meursault's attitude toward love reflects his lack of involvement with life. In Part One, he makes no statement of love for his mother at the time of her death. He seems to feel that she is his responsibility. Thus, he pays for her care at the retirement home, but he seldom visits her and does not remember her with love. Later, as he contemplates Salamano's dog and his mother's fondness for it, he notes, "[Salamano] knew I loved her very much." Still, their relationship while she lived with him had been marked by long periods of silence and little show of emotion.*

*Even Meursault's affair with Marie is unemotional. He never considers the idea of whether or not he loves her until she raises the question herself. He tells her that he does not think he loves her, and that the question has no meaning. When Marie asks Meursault if he will marry her, he agrees without considering the idea of love. It is obvious that he does not consider love an essential to marriage. After Marie's appearance at the visiting room, she shouts, "You'll get out and we'll get married!" Meursault's reply is less than enthusiastic. He retorts, "You think so?"*

*When the magistrate asks Meursault if he loved his mother, the prisoner blandly replies, "Yes, the same as anyone." The ambiguity of this laconic answer implies various degrees of love in Meursault. Later, he comments, "I had pretty much lost the habit of analyzing myself . . . it was hard for me to tell him what he wanted to know. I probably did love Maman, but that didn't mean anything. At one time or another all normal people have wished their loved ones were dead . . . What I can say for certain is that I would rather Maman hadn't died.")*

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### Minor characters

4. Why does Camus add Salamano and his dog to the story? (Salamano, a widower, keeps company with an old, grotesque spaniel afflicted with mange, which covers the dog with scabs. Meursault explains that Salamano and the spaniel have been together for eight years. During that time, the old man abused the dog daily. Most witnesses to the abuse feel that something should be done about the situation. Meursault comments, "Céleste is always saying, 'It's pitiful,' but really, who's to say?")

As though misery and suffering are normal elements of life, Meursault implies that there is no harm and is a possible benefit from this perverse relationship between man and dog. His insight proves true when Salamano weeps over the spaniel's loss. He admits, "We'd have a run-in every now and then. But he was a good dog just the same."

Salamano represents the human fault of taking for granted those beings that deserve love. When Meursault perceives that Salamano is pacing and weeping in his apartment next door, he suddenly and inexplicably thinks of his deceased mother. Camus suggests that, like Salamano, Meursault's sentimental side lies too deep to surface completely.)

### Conflict

5. Why does Meursault shoot the Arab? (There is no single reason why Meursault murders an unnamed victim. A combination of factors play on his mental and physical consciousness when he fires Raymond's revolver. One reason is subtle changes Meursault undergoes: He compliments Marie's beauty, causing her to laugh with delight. At the beach, Meursault seriously considers marrying her. Later, in the sea, she arouses his passion. Also, he allows himself to be drawn into Raymond's personal antipathy for the Moorish woman, whom he torments. These responses suggest a more complex Meursault than the first view. After the fight with the Arabs and Raymond's departure to seek medical care for the cuts, Meursault returns to the spring at the peak of confusion and frustration. Added to physical exhaustion from swimming and walking in the sun, he turns his thoughts to the "cool spring behind the rock. I wanted to hear the murmur of its water again, to escape the sun and the strain and the women's tears, and to find shade and rest again at last.")

Instead of a rest, Meursault confronts the angry Arab, who menaces him with a knife. At the moment of threat, the light reflects from the blade, "like a long flashing blade cutting at my forehead . . . All I could feel were the cymbals of sunlight crashing on my forehead and, indistinctly, the dazzling spear flying up from the knife in front of me." Tense to the point of breaking, he fires.)

### Character Development

6. How does the trial trigger change in Meursault? (Perhaps the most fundamental dogma of existentialism is a belief that people possess only simple existence at birth. Only through experiencing joy and sorrow do they gain essence. Thus, full participation in life creates a whole person. Meursault seems to exist without meaning until the trial, when he gains essence, in part through realization that he is guilty of murder.)

Once Meursault's freedom ends, he realizes how much he misses it. He suffers the torment of longing, especially for sexual release. He remembers "the sound of the first waves under my feet, my body entering the water and the sense of relief it would give me, all of a sudden I would feel

just how closed in I was by the walls of my cell." A few months later, he envisions himself imprisoned in a tree trunk.

Near the end of the trial, Meursault concentrates on the ice cream vendor he hears in the street. Meursault admits, "I was assailed by memories of a life that wasn't mine any more, but one in which I'd found the simplest and most lasting joys: The smells of summer, the part of town I loved, a certain evening sky, Marie's dresses and the way she laughed." At this point in his development, he realizes, the "utter pointlessness of whatever I was doing there seized me by the throat.")

### Philosophy

7. Why does Meursault reject the chaplain? (Meursault refuses repeatedly to receive the chaplain. Rather, he concentrates on thoughts of escape, appeal, and execution. The order of thoughts creates a balance and credence, by which he finds peace. Having reached an emotional plateau, he thinks of Marie when the chaplain walks in unannounced and challenges the prisoner's boldness in rejecting Christianity.)

Just as his mother had dismissed thoughts of religion, Meursault is open and honest about atheism. He sees no reason to contemplate sin. If he pays his penalty by incarceration, society should expect nothing more. He rejects the chaplain's idea about seeing a "divine face" and refutes the preconceived notion of an afterlife.

Refusing to allow a criminal to dismiss the faith, the chaplain asserts, "Your heart is blind." He triggers a violent turbulence in Meursault, who explodes, "Something inside me snapped. I started yelling at the top of my lungs, and I insulted him and told him not to waste his prayers on me." Not merely crazed, Meursault rejects the implication that the chaplain enjoys a better form of life by being Christian.

Meursault challenges, "He wasn't even sure he was alive, because he was living like a dead man . . . I was sure about me, about everything, surer than he could ever be, sure of my life and sure of the death I had waiting for me. Yes that was all I had. But at least I had as much of a hold on it as it had on me." Refusing to shrink in the face of the patronizing clergy, Meursault listens and reacts naturally. By voicing sentiment, he affirms his grip both on identity and integrity.)

### Behavior

8. How does Meursault manifest his belief that much of life is absurd? (Meursault's malaise is obvious from the first. He sees action and inaction as productive of the same end. Nothing matters to him except the physical comforts—sex, sleep, cigarettes, wine, food, idle conversation, and relief from heat. Certain events seem to substantiate his view that much of life is absurd: Salamano curses his dog for eight years, then mourns its loss; Raymond fights in the street with his mistress's brother, but solves nothing.)

In similar absurd fashion, Meursault kills the Arab without knowing why. In retribution, a jury condemns Meursault for his actions, not because he has killed a human being, but because Meursault seems callous, indifferent, and unloving toward his deceased mother. To corroborate his sense of the ridiculous, he treasures an old scrap of newspaper that narrates the story of a well-meaning Czech whose sister and mother murder him. As Meursault awaits execution, he consoles himself with the fact that, whether he dies at thirty or seventy, he faces the same sentence that all people face, innocent or guilty.



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Voicing rage at the chaplain, Meursault sinks into acceptance of life that brings him peace and understanding. Ironically, he thinks of his mother. He realizes why she wanted to start life again with another husband. Washed clean of hope, Meursault opens himself "to the gentle indifference of the world." Happy at last, he looks forward to a relief from alienation—in the jeers of the spectators who will revel in his decapitation.)

### Author Purpose

9. Why does the author divide the novel into two sections? (Camus's division offers insight into meaning. He makes Part One a story of death; the second part tells of rebirth. The novel opens with death, includes the death of a despised dog, and concludes with the murder of an unnamed Arab. Simultaneously, Meursault's lifeless, unfulfilling existence lacks aspiration at the same time that he draws no understanding from the sufferings and loss of other beings. Carried by whim, he acts because he has nothing better to do.

Ironically, the book takes on added life with the arrest, trial, and imprisonment of the guilty man. No longer able to move about Algiers as he once had, Meursault frees his spirit for the first time and changes from man of action to contemplative man. He realizes that emotions are a human essential, the missing aspect of his personality that he had deliberately avoided. He begins to know the satisfaction of a full life. He achieves greater release of tension from screaming his refutation of Christianity at the priest than from his love affair with Marie because, for the first time, he asserts what he truly believes.)

### Structure

10. How does Meursault function as protagonist and antagonist?

(Unlike novels with heroes and villains, this book features a protagonist who lacks the usual grace and nobility of the hero. The focal character feels most comfortable following the events of his life without taking a stand or expending energy. When his employer offers him a promotion, he rejects change and sticks to the instinctual pattern of eating, sleeping, working, taking random pleasure, and passing time. His predictable life, like that of a prisoner in a cell, dwells in tight confines of his own making. Not until he frees himself of outside intervention by the Christian intruder does Meursault assert leadership and acquire nobility.

As antagonist, Meursault kills an Arab and unsuspectingly confronts his own emptiness. This struggle reveals that Meursault has hardened himself to coldness and brutality. In so doing, he denies his humanity, the spiritual self that separates him from bestiality. In jail, he challenges his faulty self and forces his deformed persona into the light. Unknown to him, the enemy is the inner man, the shadow self that has fled the light. As death approaches, Meursault comes to knowledge of self and forges a union of protagonist and antagonist.)

### HOW LANGUAGE WORKS

Camus deliberately strips his novel of intense conversation until the cataclysm with the priest. Previous to that, several characters speak perfunctorily:

1. The director speaks unctuously, "Whenever one of the residents dies, the others are a bit on edge for the next two or three days. And that makes it difficult for them."
2. The caretaker is a little more personal with his remark, "We put the cover on, but I'm supposed to unscrew the casket so you can see her."
3. The nurse remarks matter-of-factly, "If you go slowly, you

risk getting sunstroke."

4. The old man who terrorizes his dog yells repeatedly, "Filthy, stinking bastard!"
5. Raymond, reporting his fight, summarizes; "I asked him if he'd had enough. He said, 'Yes.'"
6. The boss says of a job in Paris, "You're young, and it seems to me it's the kind of life that would appeal to you."
7. Masson notes absently, "My wife always takes a nap after lunch. Me, I don't like naps."
8. Raymond opens commentary about killing the Arab with the comment, "But if he doesn't draw his knife, you can't shoot."
9. The judge explains, "If you don't hire an attorney yourself, the court will appoint one."
10. In court, the reporter admits, "You know, we've blown your case up a little."
11. Céleste's comment on the crime is metaphysical: "The way I see it, it's bad luck. Everybody knows what bad luck is."
12. The prosecutor speaks an illogical, overblown indictment, "I accuse this man of burying his mother with crime in his heart!"
13. The first real exchange of the novel occurs in the final pages, when Meursault battles the intrusive, patronizing chaplain. Even then, the lines are clipped, devoid of much color:  
chaplain: *You're wrong, my son. More could be asked of you. And it may be asked.*  
Meursault: *And what's that?*  
chaplain: *You could be asked to see.*  
Meursault: *See what?*  
chaplain: *... A divine face emerge from the darkness. That is the face you are asked to see.*

### ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

1. Design an Internet homepage from an illustrated guide to Algiers, a handbill featuring bungalows at an Algerian beach, a banner announcing a soccer victory or public beheading, a streetcar or bus schedule for Algiers, a schematic drawing of a guillotine, a poster announcing a Fernandel comedy, a menu for Céleste's restaurant, a business card for Meursault's attorney or one of the three judges, first aid for sunstroke or a superficial cut, an epitaph for Meursault or his mother, illustrated entries on low-price rest homes on the coast, a chart detailing the history of Algeria during French occupation, and a sketch of a trowler or pince-nez.
2. Draw a wrap-around book jacket or poster emphasizing the rhythms of life in Meursault's community. Stress the importance of movies, tobacco, wine, streetcars, buses, Céleste's restaurant, the soccer team, neighbors, dogs, and the nearness of the sea.
3. Create a bulletin board illustrating visual scenes from the novel.

### Economics

Explain in a theme how the author visualizes working-class people. Discuss the importance of work to Meursault's standing in the community and before the Court of Assizes. Comment on the discounting or dismissal of Céleste, Raymond, and Marie as character witnesses.

### Cinema

View various films about criminals or outcasts, e. g. *Native Son* or *The Grapes of Wrath*. Discuss why criminals are often people on the periphery of society or people cut off from normal modes of communication and social interaction. In what respect are Meursault and his friends negligible citizens, criminals, outcasts, or social pariahs?

## STRANGER

### Language Arts

1. Describe aloud Meursault's reluctance to justify his actions or to pose as a conformist. Explain how the terms hero and antihero apply to his behaviors and beliefs.
2. Contrast minor characters in terms of action, control, and compassion. Which characters are stereotypes? Which seem like characterizations of real people? Which have the most influence on the action?
3. Create and discuss a list of images from the novel that appeal to the five senses, for instance "All of it—the sun, the smell of leather and horse dung from the hearse, the smell of varnish and incense, and my fatigue after a night without sleep—was making it hard for me to see or think straight."
4. Divide the class into small groups to study the background elements of the story. Ask participants to explain the significance of Arabs, the Court of Assizes, bailiff, prosecution, three judges, the press, crucifix, and the Antichrist to Meursault's incarceration, interrogation, trial, and execution.
5. Make a time line of events in the story. Emphasize the period of time that Meursault lives alone, visits his mother, works at his office, knows Marie and Raymond, visits Masson's bungalow, swims at the beach, rides the bus, and spends in prison and in court.
6. Apply a Freytag diagram to the novel. Label parts of the plot that form exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. Why does this clear delineation of action lend itself well to radio, audio cassette, or the stage? What problems would a producer have in staging *The Stranger* as an opera, TV miniseries, video, or outdoor musical drama?
7. Read aloud other descriptions of antiheroes. Discuss minor elements that trigger withdrawal, despair, or fantasy. Account for public or family condemnation of antiheroes in each work.
8. Write a theme in which you explain the role of a minor incident in the action. Choose from these: Meursault reads about a murder in a scrap of newspaper, Meursault sucks a wood chip, Raymond cooks blood sausages, Meursault's father witnesses an execution, Salamano loses his dog on the parade ground, Marie helps Madame Masson wash dishes, and the nurse warns Meursault about sunstroke.
9. Draw a Venn diagram representing Meursault and Camus. Note the intersection of their lives, such as life in French Algeria, atheism, and familiarity with Paris. Name obvious differences, particularly Camus's family life, accidental death, ambition, education, and humanism.
10. Survey the critical response to *The Stranger*, both at the time the novel was published, after its second major translation, and now. Express how current attitudes toward criminals and civil rights influence critical appraisals.
11. Compose an extended definition of absurdism. Explain why Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, and their contemporaries turned to irrational, nihilistic, non-Christian, atheistic, non-traditional, or nonconformist attitudes to help them cope with the turmoil before, during, and after Nazism and totalitarian control of much of Europe.

### Geography

Use topographical maps to describe the terrain the story covers, particularly the area around Algiers, Algeria, Oran, and the Mediterranean Sea.

### History and Social Studies

1. Compose an extended definition of social isolation. Explain to a small group why the traditions and prejudices of the

- magistrate, director, caretaker, priest, judges, neighbors, and chaplain rob them of sympathy for Meursault. Indicate why a devout Christian would call Meursault the Antichrist.
2. Describe in a short speech the effects of isolation, suffering, poverty, old age, loneliness, condemnation, limited education, and imprisonment on characters in the story. How do these characters fend for themselves: Meursault, Salamano, Thomas Pérez, Arab stalkers, Raymond, Madame Meursault, mourners, Marie, the robotic woman, the caretaker, and Céleste?
3. Explain briefly the confrontation between Meursault and the magistrate or Meursault and the chaplain. Join with others to act out differences of opinion about goodness, character, culpability, religion, God, salvation, and the afterlife.
4. Compose a short segment in which you report on female roles in Algerian society, particularly the nurse, Madame Meursault, Marie, Madame Masson, the Moorish woman, and the mourners. Determine which women have the greatest influence on the action.
5. Compose an informal essay on burial customs. Select two cultures to contrast, for instance, France and Algeria or the United States and the Caribbean. Discuss how lack of refrigeration encourages quicker burial, closed coffins, fewer formal ceremonies, burial at sea, or cremation.
10. What is France's current relationship with Algeria? How are Algerian residents in France treated?

### Psychology and Health

1. Explain with diagrams the types of relationships that exist between these pairs: Meursault/robotic woman, Moorish woman/police, Moorish woman's brother/Raymond, Marie/Meursault, Thomas Pérez/Madame Meursault, chaplain/Meursault, director/undertaker, Salamano/neighbors, and magistrate/the press.
2. Discuss your response to Meursault's indifference and amorality. Explain why he does not express concern for his mother, claim to love Marie, disapprove of abuse of females, reject the offer of the gun, object to Raymond's disrespect to the police, or question Raymond's motives in smearing the Moorish woman's reputation.
3. Discuss with a group the theme of isolation. Why does Meursault move his mother to the home? Why does he attend her vigil and sit apart from the other mourners? How does a two-hour bus ride affect his pattern of visitation to his mother? Why does he hate Sunday? Why is he unenthusiastic about marrying Marie? Why is he transferred to a one-man cell? How does he anticipate his execution?
4. Characterize rescuers and their relationships to victims. Include the spaniel/Salamano, Céleste/Meursault, Meursault/Raymond, police/Moorish woman, and the Moorish woman's brother/Raymond.

### Law

1. Lead a debate about the severity of Meursault's penalty. Discuss the differences between manslaughter, self-defense, and second-degree murder. Explain how the discomfort of the courtroom and whirring fans make Meursault too dizzy and lethargic to defend himself.
2. Make an oral report on pros and cons of capital punishment. Select a group to summarize methods of execution worldwide.
3. Compose a first person account of the overwhelmingly one-sided testimony in the court and its effect on the witnesses, audience, press, chaplain, and Meursault. List facts and observations that would help Meursault's case. Read your final version before a live audience.

## STRANGER

### Speech and Drama

1. Write several conversations that are only implied, take place in terse exchanges, or are described second-hand, such as Meursault's discussions with his mother and father. Act out your dialogue for an audio or video taping.
2. Draw settings for a stage version of *The Stranger*. Show the placement of actors, music, costumes, props, sound effects, and lighting.
3. Role-play the part of the magistrate. Express why Meursault offends conventional thinkers such as the director, mourners, priest, chaplain, and audience. Indicate how Meursault might resemble the Antichrist.
4. Compose a short speech in which you describe neglect, sin, vice, or crime and their effects on the lives of these characters: Meursault's employer, Céleste, the Moorish woman and her brother, the director, Madame Meursault, Thomas Pérez, Meursault's attorney, the press, Meursault, the three judges, the priest, the chaplain, the weeping mourner, Raymond, the accompanying Arab, Marie, Salamano, and the Massons.

### ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. Compose a list of scenes for a mural or cartoon depicting Algiers and its residents. Include these details:
  - a. a Sunday street scene
  - b. summer heat
  - c. violence at the beach
  - d. bungalows along the Mediterranean Sea
  - e. punishment for murder
  - f. local interest in crime
  - g. interracial relations
  - h. funeral customs
  - i. transportation to local entertainments
  - j. Christian beliefs and prejudices
2. Make a thorough list of items essential to a movie version of the book. Isolate items that pertain to the shooting and its aftermath.
3. Compose a scene in which Meursault discusses with his mother his low pay and the impossibility of providing better care for her in old age.
4. Make a character list and explain the qualities of each.
5. Account for the recurrence of the motifs of heat and light.

### ANSWER KEY

#### VOCABULARY TEST

- |                  |               |
|------------------|---------------|
| 1. imperceptibly | 11. pince-nez |
| 2. gesture       | 12. devoured  |
| 3. promontory    | 13. precision |
| 4. cordial       | 14. liaison   |
| 5. oppressive    | 15. asphodels |
| 6. destitute     | 16. varnish   |
| 7. distracted    | 17. scaffold  |
| 8. commotion     | 18. scandal   |
| 9. quavering     | 19. cymbals   |
| 10. taciturn     | 20. assailed  |

#### COMPREHENSION TEST A

##### Part I: Sentence Completion (30 points)

- |             |                |               |
|-------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1. Massons  | 6. Algiers     | 11. chaplain  |
| 2. fans     | 7. balcony     | 12. four      |
| 3. Salamano | 8. execution   | 13. freight   |
| 4. sun      | 9. caretaker   | 14. murder    |
| 5. fiancée  | 10. magistrate | 15. Fernandel |

##### Part II: Matching (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. G | 6. H  |
| 2. D | 7. B  |
| 3. A | 8. F  |
| 4. J | 9. E  |
| 5. C | 10. I |

##### Part III: True/False (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F  |
| 2. F | 7. T  |
| 3. T | 8. T  |
| 4. F | 9. T  |
| 5. F | 10. F |

##### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

#### COMPREHENSION TEST B

##### Part I: Matching (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. A | 6. G  |
| 2. E | 7. J  |
| 3. I | 8. B  |
| 4. D | 9. C  |
| 5. F | 10. H |

##### Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

1. letter about the Moorish woman
2. Meursault
3. crucifix
4. his attorney
5. it takes two hours both ways
6. Parisians
7. Raymond
8. chaplain
9. Marie
10. shake hands with the mourners, wash, sign papers

##### Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

1. nurse, an abscess
2. eight, rue de Lyon
3. his mother died, his mother's age
4. lends Meursault an arm band, movies with Meursault
5. his mistress cheats on him, take Meursault to meet Masson

##### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

## STRANGER

### VOCABULARY TEST

Underline the correct word to complete each of the following sentences.

1. So afterwards, with the streetcars running less often and the sky already blue above the trees and the lamps, the neighborhood emptied out, almost (aptly, deviously, imperceptibly, meekly), until the first cat slowly made its way across the now deserted street.
2. I don't know what kind of (trawler, quay, gesture, condolence) I made, but he stayed where he was, behind me.
3. Before we reached the edge of the plateau, we could already see the motionless sea, and farther out, a massive, drowsy-looking (convulsion, promontory, tic, tamarisk) in the clear water.
4. The result was that our discussions became more (cordial, exultant, misgiving, procured).
5. His presence was grating and (dank, inseparable, oblong, oppressive).
6. In the little mortuary he told me that he'd come to the home because he was (flustered, vague, destitute, meticulous).
7. I thought about those things a little more, but I was (repulsive, distracted, molten, snide) by the sound of a bell ringing inside the buildings.
8. There was some (zeal, commotion, adversary, propriety) behind the windows, then everything quieted down again.
9. She had a remarkable voice which didn't go with her face at all, a melodious, (quavering, acquitted, indicted, conferring) voice.
10. He started out by saying that people were describing me as a (cortege, colleague, altar, taciturn) and withdrawn person and he wanted to know what I thought.
11. To my left I heard the sound of a chair being pulled out and I saw a tall, thin man dressed in red and wearing a (knife, pince-nez, parricide, vigil) who was carefully folding his robe as he sat down.
12. The bread was good; I (devoured, assailed, exposed, insulted) my share of the fish.
13. I'd been struck by this picture because the guillotine looked like such a (divine, analyzing, precision, Moorish) instrument, perfect and gleaming.
14. Gentlemen of the jury, the day after his mother's death, this man was out swimming, starting up a dubious (spaniel, liaison, casket, chill), and going to the movies, a comedy, for laughs.
15. It was covered with yellowish rocks and the whitest (imagination, underworld, censor, asphodels) set against the already hard blue of the sky.
16. All of it—the sun, the smell of leather and horse dung from the hearse, the smell of (varnish, acolytes, pointlessness, sunstroke) and incense, and my fatigue after a night without sleep—was making it hard for me to see or think straight.
17. Mounting the (machine, punch, scaffold, blade), going right up into the sky, was something the imagination could hold on to.
18. I wanted to hear the (murmur, scandal, tobacconist, vice) of its water again, to escape the sun and the strain and the women's tears, and to find shade and rest again at last.
19. All I could feel were the (cymbals, divine, indifference, cottage) of sunlight crashing on my forehead and, indistinctly, the dazzling spear flying up from the knife in front of me.
20. "I was (assailed, vindicated, annoyed, slugged) by memories of a life that wasn't mine any more, but one in which I'd found the simplest and most lasting joys.

**STRANGER**

**COMPREHENSION TEST A**

**Part I: Sentence Completion (30 points)**

Supply a term to complete each of the following statements.

1. Meursault accepts an invitation to the \_\_\_\_\_' bungalow.
2. The movement of the courtroom \_\_\_\_\_ makes Meursault dizzy.
3. In the next room, Meursault hears \_\_\_\_\_ pacing and weeping.
4. Meursault blames his criminal actions on the \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Thomas Pérez treated Madame Meursault like a \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The bus ride back to \_\_\_\_\_ returns Meursault to a nest of city lights.
7. The day after the funeral, he sits on his \_\_\_\_\_ observing the street below.
8. Meursault's father vomited from viewing a disgusting \_\_\_\_\_.
9. An aged rest home \_\_\_\_\_ provides Meursault with coffee and milk.
10. The angry \_\_\_\_\_ considers Meursault the Antichrist.
11. The \_\_\_\_\_ sees a divine face in prison walls.
12. The magistrate questions why Meursault shoots \_\_\_\_\_ additional bullets into the Arab.
13. Meursault can't afford adequate care for his mother on a \_\_\_\_\_ clerk's salary.
14. The press anticipates the next case, the trial of a \_\_\_\_\_.
15. After swimming, Marie and Meursault attend a comedy featuring \_\_\_\_\_.

**Part II: Matching (20 points)**

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left.

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| ___ 1. claims to be a warehouse guard.             | A. caretaker               |
| ___ 2. played a trick on his mother and sister.    | B. Céleste                 |
| ___ 3. sits with Meursault in the mortuary.        | C. Moorish woman           |
| ___ 4. thinks Meursault's "heart is blind."        | D. Czechoslovakian         |
| ___ 5. receives a letter written by Meursault.     | E. Emmanuel                |
| ___ 6. advances on Raymond, Meursault, and Masson. | F. director                |
| ___ 7. believes Meursault is a victim of bad luck. | G. Raymond Sints           |
| ___ 8. wears the ribbon of the Legion of Honor.    | H. Moorish woman's brother |
| ___ 9. races with Meursault to a passing truck.    | I. Meursault's boss        |
| ___ 10. believes Meursault lacks ambition.         | J. chaplain                |

## STRANGER

### Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either **T** for true or **F** if any part is false.

- \_\_\_ 1. The attorney expects an easy trial and a verdict favorable to Meursault.
- \_\_\_ 2. Madame Meursault cried constantly after leaving Algiers.
- \_\_\_ 3. The elderly mourner takes shortcuts to the cemetery.
- \_\_\_ 4. Most of the jurors look suspiciously on Meursault and his witnesses.
- \_\_\_ 5. The trial begins the month after the shooting.
- \_\_\_ 6. In the weeks after Madame Meursault's death, nothing seems the same.
- \_\_\_ 7. The magistrate makes Meursault's actions seem callous and unfeeling.
- \_\_\_ 8. Two of the judges wear black; one wears red.
- \_\_\_ 9. The execution is set for the guillotine in the public square.
- \_\_\_ 10. Meursault finds no peace in his cell and pants like a dog at the door.

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain how Meursault comes to shoot the Arab.
2. Contrast the pleasure of swimming with the misery of walking in the sun.
3. Discuss why Meursault's neighbors think ill of him.
4. Account for Marie's desertion of Meursault.
5. Describe Meursault's attitude toward sentencing and the death penalty.

**STRANGER**

**COMPREHENSION TEST B**

**Part I: Matching (20 points)**

Match the following events with locations from the list below. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| _____ 1. An Arab blows three notes on a reed.                             | A. spring                |
| _____ 2. Meursault observes the soccer team.                              | B. mortuary              |
| _____ 3. Meursault says little to a soldier.                              | C. Parade Grounds        |
| _____ 4. Meursault corroborates Raymond's story about the Moorish woman.  | D. police station        |
| _____ 5. Thomas Pérez collapses.  | E. balcony               |
| _____ 6. A robotlike woman checks off radio programs.                     | F. cemetery              |
| _____ 7. Three visitors finish lunch before 11:30 A. M.                   | G. Céleste's restaurant  |
| _____ 8. The caretaker stacks cups for Madame Meursault's friends to use. | H. Raymond's apartment   |
| _____ 9. The spaniel slips away from Salamano.                            | I. bus                   |
| _____ 10. A police officer warns Raymond about disrespect.                | J. the Massons' bungalow |

**Part II: Short Answer (30 points)**

Supply a word or phrase in answer to each of the following questions. Place your response in the blank provided at left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. What document makes Meursault seem like an accomplice?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Who understands Madame Meursault better after observing the landscape of Marengo?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What gift does Meursault reject?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Who claims that Meursault is being punished for his lack of emotion at his mother's funeral?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Why does Meursault dread the bus ride to Marengo?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. What people does Meursault describe as pale?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Who walks ahead of Meursault without talking?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Who causes Meursault to scream with anger?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Who visits Meursault only once?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. What does Meursault do immediately before the procession?

## STRANGER

### Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Underline a word or phrase from each set of parentheses to complete the following statements.

1. The Moorish (nurse, officer, soccer player, tobacconist) wears a bandage over (a superficial cut, an arm band, scabs, an abscess).
2. For (three, eleven, two, eight) years, Salamano drags the spaniel down the (stairs, hall to the balcony, Parade Grounds, rue de Lyon).
3. Meursault is unsure when (the funeral will take place, his mother died, the bus leaves for Marengo, Marie can visit him at the prison) and doesn't know (whether Marie will marry him, whether he can afford bus fare, his mother's age, the penalty for premeditated murder.)
4. At the office, Emmanuel (expresses his condolences, refuses a transfer to Paris, borrows a black tie, lends Meursault an arm band) and attends (a soccer game, movies with Meursault, most of the trial, the execution in the public square.)
5. Raymond contends that (the lottery ticket is his, pawning goods will keep the Moorish woman in money, his mistress cheats on him, Marie will make a good wife) and intends to (carry a knife to the beach, take Meursault to meet Masson, testify that Meursault is unlucky, defy the press for maligning the murderer.)

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Contrast Meursault and Madame Meursault in their religiosity and anticipation of death.
2. Discuss the importance of commonplace experiences in Meursault's life.
3. Describe aspects of Algerian culture in the novel.
4. Account for Meursault's peaceful attitude.
5. Characterize the role of climate in the novel.



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