

# The sun motif in "the stranger" by albert camus essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## **The Sun Motif in “ The Stranger” by Albert Camus Essay Sample**

The sun becomes one of the most important motifs in Albert Camus’ “ The Stranger”. The imagery Camus uses when describing the sun sets the stage for the climax of Mersault’s murder of the Arab. More than anything the sun is depicted as a distraction to Mersault. It causes him to do things he would not normally do and clouds his judgement, causing him to commit a serious crime which will cause his own death. The sun is in a way a representation of the constraints society places upon Mersault. The effect the sun has on Mersault that results in death is a parallel to the effect of society on Mersault, which also results in death.

In the pages leading up to the murder of the Arab, the sun is the driving force of Mersault’s actions. “ The sun glinted off Raymond’s gun” (56) when Mersault took it from him on the beach. “ We stood there motionless, as if everything had closed in around us” (56). This gives the reader a sense of foreboding and the first glimpse that the sun will play an important part, along with the gun, in the rest of the chapter. The sun and its heat cause Mersault to decide to continue walking on the beach rather than ascend the steps of the bungalow. Though he says the sun was “ making it hard for me to go on” (57), Mersault continues walking on the beach towards the spring, where he anticipates being able to cool off.

The murder scene itself is rich in solar imagery and the sun is depicted as the cause of the murder. “ It was the same sun, the same light still shining on the same sand as before” (58). This quote suggests that the tension that

existed previously during the confrontation with the group of Arabs was still present and that in a way nothing had changed. When it becomes clear that if he stayed any longer there would be conflict, Mersault knows that all he has to do is turn around. All he has to do is walk away, " But the whole beach, throbbing in the sun, was pressing on my back" (58). He takes a few steps towards the Arab, the glare of the sun becoming physically painful, and after a few more steps the Arab draws his knife. The sun flashes off the knife, blinding Mersault, his sweat in his eyes preventing him from seeing, the light scorching and stabbing at his eyes. " The trigger gave" (58) and it was all over for Mersault.

The imagery that Camus uses of the oppressive sun parallels the oppression that Mersault endures from society. Society overpowers Mersault and bears down upon him. Just like the sun does to Mersault throughout the course of chapter 6, society smothers and suffers those who refuse to conform.

Society, generally thought to be a good thing, is made sinister in the novel, just as the sun which gives life to the earth causes such destruction. The heat of the sun represents the pressures of society, which hates Mersault because he refuses to assimilate. He refuses to cry at his mothers funeral, he refuses to show remorse for the death of the Arab, he is not " normal." These are society's justifications for its treatment of Mersault, indifferent to his humanity just as the sun is.

The sun motif in " The Stranger" is the most significant one in the novel. It causes the major action of the novel to occur and provides the most vivid imagery Camus presents. The parallels that one can draw between the sun and society depict what Camus was trying to convey about society. Society

<https://assignbuster.com/the-sun-motif-in-the-stranger-by-albert-camus-essay-sample/>

oppresses and overpowers those who refuse to assimilate and embrace “normality.” Mersault is the epitome of abnormality and is thus the main target of society’s, of the sun’s, wrath. After the death of the Arab, Mersault “shook off the sweat and the sun” (59). This is the perfect quote to end the first half and introduce Mersault’s philosophy for the second half of the novel. He shakes off society like he shakes off the sun, eventually coming to the realization that life means nothing, and this realization ultimately frees him.