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Patrick Jackson Advance English 2 Mr. E. Hardy December 9, 2012 The Strangest Existentialism To understand how existentialism is present in *The Stranger*, written by Albert Camus in 1946, we first need to understand what existentialism is, and originally being written in French, the book presents some troubles in understanding and comprehending the existentialism that is present. Existentialism is a philosophical approach to understanding human existence and experiences. It is based on the assumption that individuals are free and responsible for their own choices and actions. Acting on your own experiences is essential in arriving at the truth and " man is condemned to be free. " (Sartre). Existentialism is present in mainly two events that occur in the story, when Meursault is on the beach, and he shoots the Arab. And when he is about to be killed at the end of the story. One part of the novel that displays existentialism is when Meursault shot the Arab on the beach and how he handled the situation afterwards. The Arab drew his weapon, and in this case it was a knife and held it up to Meursault, but that occurrence was not what bothered Meursault at all, it was the light from the sun that shot off the Arab's knife, and along with the intense heat along with the salt from his sweat in his eyes that was bothering him before. Meursault shot the Arab mainly because he was uncomfortable with the heat and sunlight shining off the knife, not because he felt threatened. In the following pages, Meursault can't understand why he would need an attorney for his case because it's simple to him, he had murdered a man and was now ready to pay the consequences. It exemplifies existentialism because it shows the power of free choice, which is what existentialism solely is. Being able to choose one's destiny as a way of free choice. The other part of the story that displays existentialism is at the end of the novel when Meursault is

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sentenced to death. In my personal opinion, I do not think Meursault was an existentialist, until he faced his death the way an existentialist might've.

Taken from page 123, Meursault says, " I felt that I had been happy and that I was happy again." For him, there was no difference between life and death, everything was the same to him. It could be argued that he felt no emotion for any such thing, such as when Marie asked if he would marry her and he said it didn't matter and that it was up to her. In this moment, for the first time in the book he realizes what his mother might've felt before she died, only to be put in the same situation. This point helps to understand

existentialism because throughout the whole book his mother's death—which is the first event to occur in the story—had absolutely no meaning to him at all until he is placed in the same situation—facing death—he finally realizes what it must have been like for her and for the first time in the whole story thinks about her feelings. From the existentialist point of view you must accept the risk and responsibility of your choices and follow the commitment to wherever it leads, as Meursault displays at the end of the story. Someone that is put in a particular situation understands it far more than someone looking in on that same situation—could be shown when the man is talking Meursault just before his execution. The man doesn't understand why Meursault won't pray to Jesus for him to save the man. With Meursault constantly refusing, the man will never truly understand why he won't because he is not in the situation himself—one commonly used situation that appears often in existentialist writing is that of death. Bibliography Ankrom,

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