

How does the
character of marie
and



In *The Outsider*, Mersault is finally given a hearing and his punishment is not directly related to the murder of the Arab, but for his lack of social skills governing appropriate behaviour after his mother's death. One meaning of the title of the novel, *The Outsider*, is that if you live a life different than what society accepts, then you are a stranger; an outcast, and will be punished by the rest of society. In other words, the title refers to Mersault as the stranger in the society.

The Outsider is really about a one man's story and how his way of living and social ethics challenged society. The first page of the novel gives a shady sketch on Mersault's character. Mersault is a very quiet person who rarely shows any external emotions when a situation in which most people would. In the opening scene of the novel, we find out that his mother has just died. The first page alone gives many hints about Mersault's character and it shows him to be almost unaware of his emotions. His behaviour seems to be cold and creepy.

For example: page 1 – “ Mother died today. Or maybe yesterday, I don't know” this line and the absence of lines showing him mourning or some sort of emotion towards the death of his mother clearly shows some sort of emotional detachment. In fact he seems to be more concerned about being particular about the time she died making the reader assume that he considers the time period more important than his mother's death. Another characteristic is that he feels the need to apologize for things that are out of his control and to thank people for things that they had nothing to do with. He basically apologizes to his boss when he asks for two days off of work to go the funeral for his dead mother.

Also during the vigil and funeral his mind seems to wander elsewhere. For example- he describes his mother's old and wrinkly friends all of whom had come to pay their respects. He notices a woman sobbing hysterically and later during the walk to the burial he complains about the 'unbearable heat'. Meursault feels more oppressed by the heat than sad over his mother's death.

This insensitivity towards death and the odd behaviour is highly suspicious. It makes the reader feel as though Meursault is putting on a facade and is actually silently mourning his dead mother. But later in the novel Meursault's strange and eccentric ways do not change and the reader is forced to accept that a man like Meursault may in fact actually exist. And this strange behaviour is further more emphasized in the presence of his girlfriend Marie. Marie's character is introduced as soon as he returns from his mother's funeral. The two were acquaintances as Marie was a former employee at the same place where Meursault worked.

He then goes off for a swim with her and from the next few pages; Marie can be noted as a flirty and fun person. Marie seems to be one of the few people who put up with the eccentricities of Meursault. She doesn't run away or tell Meursault off for not mourning his deceased mother when she finds out about the death. She "Recoils slightly, but makes no remark". Blocking out the incident or pretending to overlook Meursault's oddness, Marie's behavior towards Meursault remains unchanged.

Chapter 4 looks at intimacy between the two where Meursault clearly 'wants' Marie and nothing more. Whereas Marie actually believes that their act of

intimacy wasn't just being intimate but had a profound meaning and even asks Mersault if he loves her. Mersault tells her frankly that he doesn't and that makes her sad but only for a moment. Here note the differences and similarities between Marie and Mersault. They both want the same thing and 'want' each other and are mutually attracted to each other.

But for Mersault his tone and speech suggest that for him getting intimate is just an act, whereas Marie seems to consider it much more. This scene helps to understand *The Outsider* and Mersault's character as that of being indifferent towards others and their feelings. Mersault also doesn't keep close ties with Marie who is the more 'human' of the two. Marie's behavior here reflects the indifference in Mersault's behavior and attitude to what society may think of love and the act of it. In chapter 5, Marie proposes to Mersault and her desire to get married clearly shows that she loves him but his reason for agreeing to marriage would have been a cause for concern for any other person. (He only says yes because she asked him to and not because he loved her) Marie in a way represents society and an individual, the individual side when she accepts him for him and also admits that his unique approach to everything is what she likes the most about him.

At the same time the continuous analysis of Mersault through the questions asked by Marie can be seen on pages 44 to 45 suggest her as society judging Mersault's every move and actions. She asks him if he would have given the same answer to any woman other than her and he replies yes. She asks why he would marry someone if he didn't love the person, and he doesn't have a very structured answer. There are moments of silences between these two responses and the pauses seem to be intentional making

the reader judge Mersault. Thus it is as though Marie has two sides to her – an individual playing a part in this man's life as companion and society by eyeing and observing him closely. This creates further understanding of the novel *The Outsider*, Mersault doesn't act the way society expects him too and doesn't seem to have any regrets about it.

He quite frankly states that he doesn't love Marie and he isn't the least bit emotional or apologetic about it. *The Outsider* can thus be recognized as a novel dealing with how anything that was different from the rest was treated as a threat and maybe even misunderstood by the rest of society. As in the end of the novel Mersault is condemned to death for not living by the laid out rules of society. The no show of remorse and sadness of his mother's death to his no reason other than the heat being intolerable for killing the Arab, all lead to society to feel threatened by such a man with no emotions. Marie's character and her relationship with Mersault accentuated his oddness and serves as proof for him being different.