

Behavior and character of meursault in the stranger novel



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Albert Camus' *The Stranger* follows the life of a man after the death of his mother whom one learns very little about, save for some few words of wisdom that the man, Meursault, recalls sporadically throughout the novel. One of the striking elements of the story is Meursault's seeming lack of interest in all things concerning the people that are, or should be, close to him and the events that surround him. During the viewing for his mother, and also during her funeral, Meursault expresses none of the feelings of grief or mourning that would usually accompany someone whose mother has just died. Very quickly after the funeral, in fact, when Meursault should have been in mourning, he instead quickly goes back to his normal routine, except for the addition of a new girlfriend, Marie, and his new friend, Raymond, who both become very important people to Meursault in spite of his indifferent demeanor. The story comes to climax twice: the first occurring when Meursault shoots the Arab at the beach and the second, when the chaplain comes to speak to him as Meursault waits for the result of his appeal. He is convicted of murder, having very little evidence to support his defense, and sentenced to death. However, the bulk of the argument against Meursault all refers back to how he reacted to the death of his mother, a factor which he finds to be irrelevant to his case.

Ultimately, Meursault's entire narration since the announcement of his mother's death stands as an affirmation to insignificance of death and life and the tight control society has over its population. Meursault speaks of it as he comes to terms with his death: the universe is indifferent. People ask him of his opinions, his feelings toward the things he has said and done, or of things concerning the future, wanting to drag out answers which would be

considered normal and acceptable to the society man has created. But Meursault does not confine himself to social norms and demonstrates this throughout the story in dealing with his mother's death and Marie's proposals, in befriending Raymond, and in rejecting religion. Society cares about funerals. Notice that it was the retirement home that arranged the funeral for Meursault's mother. Society cares about marriage. Society rejects lowly persons such as Raymond. Society, at least at that time, promotes religion. Meursault runs counter to such things, and, as a result, is punished by the society.

Yes, Meursault killed a man. But pining away at the reasons for it will reveal no solid conclusion. In fact, I believe it to be only a tangible affirmation of Meursault's estrangement from the society. In his narration, the reader sees that he has friends and that there are people who care about him in spite of his oddities, but they are merely individuals and do not represent the society at large. His shooting the Arab was the final straw that society needed in order to rightfully (according to its laws) show Meursault the error of his being; namely, his unwillingness to conform to societal ideals.