

Essay on the stranger



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In Albert Camus' "The Stranger" the "story of an ordinary man who gets drawn into a senseless murder" is told. Taking place in Algeria this man, Meursault, is constantly in a climate of extreme warmth, as are all the inhabitants therein. The sun, the source of light and the cause of this warmth, is thus a vital and normal part of his life. It brings warmth and comfort yet it can also cause pain and sickness. Throughout most of his life Meursault has lived with the conflicting forces of the sun and light, as a friend and foe. However in Chapter 6 these forces become unbalanced and the sun becomes an aggressor causing Meursault physical pain and jolting him into violent action.

Although the sun becomes increasingly aggressive as the novel transpires, in the beginning its forces were balanced causing some good and some bad effects. The most evidence of the sun as a foe is found during Meursault's mother's wake and funeral. During the wake Meursault is constantly "blinded" by the bright light. This combined with "the whiteness of the room" "makes his eyes hurt." However, this same light also creates a "glare on the white walls.... making him drowsy" and allowing him respite from the knowledge of his mother's death. So, all at once light was good as well as bad for Meursault. Again, during the funeral "with the sun bearing down" the heat was "inhuman and oppressive," causing Meursault great physical discomfort. Yet, in the same token, the heat is also "making it hard for Meursault to ...think straight" thereby allowing him an escape from his mother's death. Not all of the sun's effects have a flip side however; throughout the novel "the sun does Meursault a lot of good," by warming him and making him feel alive. Thus, although both positive and negative

situations come from the effects of the sun, Meursault deals with the contradictory forces and is not hindered by them.

During Chapter 6 of the novel the sun takes the position of an aggressor and leads Meursault into violent action. Although before this chapter there was a balance between the good and bad effects, during this chapter the forces of the sun became unbalanced and so it continues throughout the text as an assailant attacking Meursault at every turn. As a direct result of the sun's endless goading of Meursault, Meursault kills a man in an attempt to escape its wrath. From the beginning of the day the sun antagonizes Meursault.

Upon his departure into the outside world the sun " hits him like a slap in the face." and later on the " heat presses down on him making it hard for him to go on." Also the diction used by Camus in describing the attacks upon Meursault, make evident the physical pain it causes. The rays of are described as " blades" that " blind" and " stab" at Meursault. In fact the killing of the Arab was Meursault's attempt to avoid the reflections of the sun off of the knife the Arab possesses. These reflections " shoot off the steel.... like a long flashing blade," " cutting his forehead" and " slashing at his eyeleashes and stabbing at his stinging eyes." Not until he shoots the Arab can Meursault " shake off the sweat and the sun." Thus, as Meursault states later in the novel he kills the Arab " because of the sun," and it's many attacks upon him.

Throughout Camus' novel the sun acts the part of and aggressor and comforter and Meursault deals with these conflicting positions. However during the beach scene the sun leans on the side of aggressor, tormenting

Meursault to the point that he will do anything to escape its wrath— even murder.