

Comparison of camus and dostoevsky

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Though written by completely different authors in completely different times and places, the works *The Stranger* and *Crime and Punishment* show many similarities in the actions and views of the protagonists. Raskolnikov and Meursault show similarities through their existentialist views of life, actions towards others, and wanting of escape from the real world or conscience world. These character similarities suggest similarities in the views of the two authors Fyodor Dostoevsky and Albert Camus. The two authors are trying to convey slightly different, yet almost identical existentialist views to the reader.

These views can be seen very much in the characters of Meursault and Risk. Both Raskolnikov and Meursault share existentialist views. This is shown in both the actions and words of the two characters. Although Raskolnikov is extremely poor, he decides to give Marmeladov's family his last roubles. This shows his carelessness in regards to poverty. This reflects the existentialist view of carelessness of material things. He also says " it was not the horrors of prison life, not the hard labour, the bad food, the shaven head or the patched clothes that crushed him. What did he care for all those trials and hardships. (Dostoevsky 465)

This statement shows that Raskolnikov really doesn't care much about any of these horrible things that happen to him. This leads the reader to believe that Raskolnikov is almost completely careless of everything, thus supporting his existentialist views on life. Likewise Meursault's views show, if possible, an even more careless existence. Although more extreme in essence, they are also very similar to those of Raskolnikov. Meursault sees his own mother's funeral as a burden to his weekend plans. When he returns

from the funeral, he cannot even recall the day on which she died. " Maman died today.

Or maybe it was yesterday, I don't know. " (Camus 1). For many people, a funeral would be a huge occasion in which any previous weekend plans would have been promptly forgotten. But for Meursault, it is just another thing in his way. Then to the reader's surprise, Meursault goes swimming with a girl the day he gets back as if nothing had happened. While most would be in mourning, Meursault is already looking to forget this burden on his plans by totally disregarding it and completely moving on with no remorse or regret. Meursault is also very carefree when talking to the people who are deciding the fate of his life.

The statements " I thought my case was pretty simple. " (Camus, 63) and " I said no-and that in a way, I was even interested in seeing the trial" (Camus, 83) show that Meursault talks to the police as if it were a normal thing to him. He doesn't care that these are the people that are putting him in jail for the rest of his life. To him, jail is freedom and freedom is jail. Both Raskolnikov and Meursault share the feeling that time and freedom are the only things that can burden them. They are both faced with the option of suicide as a substitute for incarceration, but neither of them accepts this fate.

This is because they are really just as happy in jail than they were in the outside world. They don't choose suicide. This is not because they are afraid of death, but because they are only certain of the uncertainty beyond it. This again reinforces their existentialist views. Raskolnikov and Meursault both have similar actions towards others. Raskolnikov is at times annoyed with

everyone, from his closest friend Razumihin to his sister Dounia. When he is sick, and everyone is just trying to help him he sends them away dismayed at their presence. It means that I'm sick to death of you all and I want to be alone. " (Dostoevsky 146) Raskolnikov says this at one point when he is totally fed up with Razumihin and his family.

Raskolnikov often times just wants to be completely alone to go over his thoughts. " Raskolnikov felt very miserable. If it had been possible to escape to some solitude, he would have thought himself lucky, even if he had to spend his whole life there. " With this statement, we see that Raskolnikov is really the happiest when no one is around and he is completely alone.

Similarly, Meursault also has the same reactions to people trying to help him. When the priest is trying to help him " find God", Meursault can't stand it. He says " the priest was starting to annoy me. " (Camus 45) Just like Raskolnikov, Meursault can't stand it when people are trying to help him. Meursault also gets very aggravated with the people at his mother's vigil. He is mad when they are all quiet and then he gets mad when they are all making noises. " Soon one of the women started crying...I wished I didn't have to listen to her anymore. " This statement by Meursault shows that he has no sympathy and is still annoyed at people who are in remorse. These characteristics of Raskolnikov and Meursault show that neither of the two is ever truly happy when there is someone else around. Neither of them are very social, even when it comes to good friends and family members. These things reinforce the existentialist actions and views of the two. They are full of frustration and isolated from the rest of the world, which are both signs of

existentialism. Raskolnikov and Meursault both have similar devices of escape. One device they both most commonly use is sleep.

Throughout both books, they seem to deal with most of the problems they face by going to sleep. As soon as Raskolnikov commits the murders, he immediately goes back home and goes to sleep. Meursault doesn't want to talk to a person while on the bus, so he just goes to sleep to avoid the whole situation. Both characters also try to avoid talking to others and even going out of their homes if it is not absolutely necessary. Meursault recalls, " I said " yes" just so I wouldn't have to say anything else. " (Camus 4) Raskolnikov also avoids everyone including his landlady just to avoid any conversation.

He sneaks out of his flat so as not to have a chance of seeing her. They also have other means of escape. Risk constantly talks to himself. " I chatter because I do nothing..." Raskolnikov is always talking to himself throughout the story without even realizing it. This for him is a means of escape to stay out of the real world. Meursault also has another means of escape that is quite similar to Raskolnikov's. Meursault says that he is not really unhappy while confined to his jail cell. " I would remember every piece of furniture... every color, texture.

I realized that a man who lived for only one day could easily live for a hundred years in prison. " This is a very powerful statement by Meursault that shows that he finds escape a joy while in prison. While supporting the existentialist view of escape that is similar to Raskolnikov's, this statement also shows another existentialist view. Even when Meursault is physically confined, he is still free in his mind. Raskolnikov shares this view when he is

in prison. He tells of how prison life, although very horrible, is still just as good, if not better, than his previous life.

All of these examples show that Raskolnikov and Meursault are very similar through their existentialist views of life, actions towards others, and wanting of escape from the real world or conscience world. These character similarities are very likely due to the fact that Albert Camus and Fyodor Dostoevsky both had strong existentialist views. The authors conveyed these views through the writing of their books. Albert Camus is trying to communicate to the reader that life has nothing good or bad to get excited about. This is why he gives no emotion whatsoever to Meursault. He believes that life is just one choice after another.

Every choice means something in the life of the person, but everything else is meaningless. Fyodor Dostoevsky shares these views with Camus. He tries to show through Raskolnikov that life is full of dread and anxiety. Raskolnikov doesn't drink much because Dostoevsky doesn't believe in drinking as a legitimate method of escape. He also gives Raskolnikov the choice of suicide as opposed to jail. But he doesn't choose this because he wants to show that suicide is pointless and will only lead to uncertainty. Thus, for both authors, choice is the only meaningful thing in life. Without options, without choices, life is nothing.