

An exploration of the utilization of writing style in the stranger



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

American author Raymond Chandler once stated, “ The most durable thing in writing is style, and style is the most valuable investment a writer can make with his time.” The writing style that an author uses is many times, in a sense, what characterizes a book or novel. When an author is writing a piece of literature, he or she always takes into consideration the type of writing style that will be used in the work. Writing style is a literary device that can be used by authors to directly influence the reader and how he or she views certain aspects of the novel.

It can be utilized in different manners to, for example, help emphasize a certain theme that the author wants to convey to the audience or to help characterize the protagonist in the novel. Also, the author can often intentionally manipulate the style to portray his or her overall purpose for the novel. In his novel *The Stranger*, author Albert Camus uses a specific writing style to reveal the main character, Meursault’s, simplistic view of his personal existence.

Additionally, he also uses a different, more complex style that serves to emphasize the significant events that occur during Meursault’s life.

Albert Camus uses a very direct and plain writing style throughout most of his novel. His purpose for this technique is to portray the fact that, through most of the story, Meursault is merely existing; emotionless and indifferent to much of what happens around him. In the first part of the novel, Camus writes in a very dry manner about the death of Meursault’s mother and his reaction to it. He writes, “ Mamam died today. Or yesterday maybe, I don’t know. I got a telegram from the home: ‘ Mother deceased, funeral tomorrow.

Faithfully yours.’ That doesn’t mean anything. Maybe it was yesterday.” (3)

These first few lines of the novel clearly demonstrate Camus’ very simplistic style. There is no complex sentence structure or elaborate use of diction or imagery in the passage. The message is portrayed very directly and it introduces readers to Meursault’s indifferent attitude toward life. A little further in the novel, on the day of the funeral, Camus writes of Meursault, “ I was tired. The caretaker took me to his room and I was able to clean up a little. I had some more coffee and milk, which was very good.” (12)

By using these short, matter-of-fact sentence structures, Camus reveals Meursault’s simple existence and how his short life does not mean very much in a world that keeps changing regardless of what he does in his own life. He is just plainly existing and he is just going through the motions of life, only concerned with the physical aspects of it and not becoming emotionally involved with anything he does, not even the death of his own mother.

Camus characterizes Meursault’s simple life by showing readers how he is merely living. “ Then I smoked a few cigarettes, still in bed, till noon...I fixed myself some eggs and ate them out of the pan, without bread because I didn’t feel like...going downstairs to buy some.” (21) He eats, sleeps, and works a clerical job only because he has to, yet he enjoys simple pleasures of life like women and cigarettes. Meursault robotically lives his life, mindless and indifferent. Later in the story Camus describes Meursault by saying, “ All I could hear was the blood pounding in my ears. I stood there, motionless. And in old Salamano’s room, the dog whimpered softly.” (33) The simple way that one can picture Meursault in this passage through Camus’ writing emphasizes the fact that he is merely existing. He is standing there, alive,

blood pumping through his body, but he takes no emotional heed to what goes on around him which mirrors the manner in which the author manipulates his writing style.

Although Camus uses a straightforward style of writing throughout most of the novel, he does write in a contrasting, more complex manner when speaking of pivotal events that take place in Meursault's life. The author's purpose for this change in writing style is to make certain events stand out from the rest of the story. This is first shown when Meursault is at his mother's funeral and they are burying her body. Camus writes, " Then there was the church and the villagers on the sidewalks , the red geraniums on the graves in the cemetery, Perez fainting (he crumpled like a rag doll) the blood red earth spilling over Maman's casket, the white flesh of the roots mixed in with it, more people, voices, the village..." (18) By using a variety of diction and imagery in this passage to describe the setting of the burial, Camus makes this excerpt stand out from the rest of his writing which is very simple and void of much detail. Although this passage still lacks much emotion, Camus' use of run-on imagery sets a fast-paced, mixed mood of an event that should be mournful and depressing. Later in the novel when Meursault is on the beach, Camus writes of him saying, " My eyes were blinded behind the curtain of tears and salt. All I could feel were the cymbals of sunlight crashing on my forehead and, indistinctly, the dazzling spear flying up from the knife in front of me. The scorching blade slashed at my eyelashes and stabbed at my stinging eyes." (59)

Here the author utilizes diction and imagery to create a sense of pain at the moment before Meursault kills the Arab. The attention that Camus has for <https://assignbuster.com/an-exploration-of-the-utilization-of-writing-style-in-the-stranger/>

detail in this passage shows that it is an important and significant event in Meursault's life as his life will soon be completely changed after he shoots and kills the Arab. He will have "knocked four quick times on the door to unhappiness." (59) Further in the story, when Meursault comes to his epiphany while in prison, Camus writes, "Throughout the whole absurd life I'd lived, a dark wind had been rising toward me from somewhere deep in my future, across years that were still to come, and as it passed, this wind leveled whatever was offered to me at the time, in years no more real than the ones I was living." (121) As Meursault comes to a self-realization near the end of the novel, Camus' writing style begins to get more complex. Like in this excerpt, he begins to use a more elaborate sentence structure. He uses many commas to combine his thoughts cohesively and this reflects the fact that, toward the end of the novel, Meursault is thinking a great deal about the significance of his own existence and trying to put all of his thoughts together in his mind. In the end he reaches his epiphany and realizes simply that "Nothing, nothing matter[s]." (121) and because of this realization that the world will go on no matter what one does in life, Meursault "Open[s] [him]self to the gentle indifference of the world." (122), ready to cease existing.

By manipulating his writing style throughout the novel, Albert Camus is able to successfully deliver the message that he wants readers to take away from *The Stranger*. He purposefully uses a clear, direct style throughout a major part of the book to portray Meursault's simple view of his own existence, while at the same time using a more complex style with a variety of structure and literary devices in parts of the novel in order to accentuate

significant events that occur in his life. Camus made a valuable investment with his time when considering his writing style and thus clearly conveys his purpose for the novel.