

Keating and meursault essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Gianluca Tucci Ms. Scopelliti ENG 4UA-01 8 April 2009 Keating vs. Mersault
Rousseau's quotation, " Man is born free yet, everywhere he is in chains" implies that a person is gifted with great possibilities and potential.

Unfortunately, the society surrounding that person is responsible for crushing that individual's essence. Those who refuse to conform to such a society are judged negatively and consequently, feel alienated. Both Keating and Meursault are strangers in a society that wants to dictate their expected behaviour and actions. Society seeks to imprison their individual freedom.

Meursault is indifferent and passive to this conventional life that is not worth living. He refuses to be anything but himself, regardless of the price he must pay. In contrast, Keating responds to such a society by actively and passionately trying to make a difference by nurturing each person to be free to reach his or her potential and essence. Society seeks to chain these two free individuals into conforming to ways that stifle their individuality and freedom, but the key lies in their choice of response in dealing with such a society, regardless of its negative judgement.

Both Keating and Meursault distinguish themselves from the masses that seek to chain their spirit. Meursault is an outsider who feels very removed from his surroundings. His reactions are very different from the conventional norms and society judges him negatively. The prosecutor describes him as a man " whose heart is so empty that it forms a chasm which threatens to engulf society" (The Outsider, 98). Meursault shows no emotion at his mother's funeral. He is indifferent to the idea of marriage to Marie, to the possibility of a job position in Paris, as well as to his verdict of the death penalty.

Meursault is judged to be an anti-Christ because he chooses not to believe in God. He refuses to lie or pretend to be something that he is not, simply to please others and to conform. He is irritated by the Chaplain, “ He started talking to me about God again, but I went up to him and made one last attempt to explain to him that I didn’t have much time left. I didn’t want to waste it on God” (The Outsider, 114). Meursault chooses to live his existence in such a way, regardless of others. By choosing not to believe in a higher power, Meursault is the creator of his own path.

His imprisonment for the murder of the Arab is symbolic to his imprisonment in life. During the courtroom proceedings, he is judged and condemned to death without ever expressing his thoughts. He is alienated both in that courtroom and in society. Mr. Keating is an English teacher whose practices are quite unusual from the other teachers. His teaching methods are not conventional and initially the students are shocked. He comes in whistling and encourages the students to call him, “ Captain! My Captain! ” (Movie). He stands on desks and teaches in the hallway.

Keating views the world in a non conventional manner and he encourages his students to do the same. Contrary to the school’s strict, stifling expectations, that seek to control and chain the students, Keating tries to set them free with his creativity and individuality. His motto is “ Seize the day” (Movie). He practices what he preaches and he encourages the students to strive to find their own voice rather than be bound to the chains. “ Make your lives extraordinary” (Movie) is his lesson in such a society. Unfortunately, he too is judged negatively by the schoolmaster, who considers him a threat to the school and well being of the students.

He is terminated because he is wrongfully held responsible for Neil's death and the reinstatement of the Dead Poets Society. Both Meursault and Keating refuse to beat to society's conventional drum. They are free people who choose to live their life according to their own standards and views.

Meursault and Keating have very different views of life. Meursault believes life is void of meaning and essence. His life is mundane and routine and nothing really makes a difference. He is passive and indifferent to people and events in his life. He chooses to act according to his needs at that particular moment, having no regrets or excuses.

Keating, on the other hand, feels that life is very worth living, regardless of society's need for conformity. He believes one should make the most of one's life by embracing its freedoms and making it extraordinary. He lives passionately by using his creativity and individualism to nurture others to do the same. Each character responds and deals with his life's experiences based on his individual view of life. Meursault and Keating react quite differently to a society that wishes to chain them down. Meursault has a negative view of life and he is content to passively exist while filling his days with routine events, void of emotion. I realized that I managed to get through another Sunday, that mother was now buried , that I was going to go back to work and that, after all, nothing had changed" (The Outsider, 28). He is interested more in the physical aspects of his life. He repeats " Nothing has changed" because his life's patterns are always the same. He sees death as an inevitable fact of life so it does not matter to him when his death occurs, " But everybody knows that life isn't worth living" (The Outsider, 109). His life

is meaningless and it is void of any essence. He finally gains a sense of affirmation and freedom when confronting his own execution.

In contrast, Keating values freedom and uses his life to inspire his students to make their life worth living. He wants them to think for themselves and to look at the world in a non conventional way in order to loosen the chains of society. He has found his own essence and he encourages others to do the same. Instead of teaching and accepting society's status quo, he empowers his students to believe they are powerful individuals who have the freedom to be “destined for great things” (Movie). His view of life is more hopeful and positive, “The powerful play goes on and you will contribute your verse” (Movie).

Each person has the opportunity to make his or her mark in such a society by using all his or her gifts. Mr Keating inspires them with his words, “Don't be resigned to live a life of quiet desperation” (Movie). He encourages them to do as he does, “Dare to strike out and find new ground” (Movie). Keating responds passionately to life and seeks to make his mark, while Meursault is content to be a passive member. In conclusion, through these two characters, the reader witnesses a society that thrives on collective conformity and discourages individual freedoms and expressions.

Although each character is considered an outsider by the masses, each continues to live his life according to his individual views. The sad reality is that both are ultimately judged negatively because they refuse to live by the chains, choosing instead to nurture their own individuality in their own way. Meursault chooses passivity when confronted with such a society. His death

ultimately frees him. Keating makes his own mark by working towards a society that values and nurtures individual freedom over chains.

The reader learns that although a person is born free and immersed in a conforming society, there is always a choice to be made. One can choose to be indifferent and passive or be active and forge ahead to try to make one's life remarkable. In choosing the latter, one becomes free from society's heavy chains in order to turn an ordinary existence into an extraordinary one. Works Cited Camus, Albert. *The Outsider* (Penguin Modern Classics). New York: Penguin Books Ltd, 2000. "Dead Poet's Society – Script." *The World of Juwhan Ryu*. 07 Apr. 2009 .