

Albert camus: written assignment



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

During the interactive oral, we discussed the main theme of the meaninglessness of human life that is present in *The Stranger* by Albert Camus. We emphasized mainly on Meursault's detached and unemotional characteristics, especially when the jury uses this against him at his trial: "He stated that I had no place in a society whose most fundamental rules I ignored" (102). Meursault is very isolated from his society, and during his trial all the odds are not in his favor because in this case Meursault is viewed as a minority when compared to the Arabs in Algeria.

Even the prosecutor claims that Meursault does not feel remorse about killing the Arab, and this connects to the theme of the meaninglessness of human life, where Meursault's feelings towards this entire case is mutual and religion, life, and death does not matter to him. In reference to the title, we also pinpointed that Meursault acts as the stranger when placed in this society because he is disconnected and does not belong in this "normal" society, he is seen an outsider.

And, we concluded that the character conflicts are targeted towards man versus society and man versus self. Because it is clear that Meursault does what comforts him the most instead of pleasing others and bothering to care about what everyone thinks about him. A major cultural impact that is presented in this novel is the idea of religion and the role of the elderly. Based on the first chapter, we learn that Meursault puts his mother in an old people's home, however, later we realize that the jury found this unacceptable. This gave Meursault a disadvantage against his murder case because in this society, it is morally wrong to put an elder relative in an elderly home.

Also during the seminar we mentioned how religion plays an important role in this society, especially when the lawyer, the judge, and the priest tries to persuade Meursault into turning to religion, however, he does not believe that God exists and the judge even calls him “ Monsieur Antichrist” (71). When he refuses to believe in God, it connects to the idea that life is meaningless and God does not replace the absurd significance of human life. Overall I learned that there are many cultural obligations that Meursault conflicts with in *The Stranger* and with these pressures; he struggles to face his society.

An analysis of the symbolic significance of the motif of the sun in *The Stranger*

The powerful effect of light can cast a shadow and blind those who come across its path. Power, especially too much, can influence the behavior of others and it can deceive people especially those who are different and follow a strange path from everyone else. Meursault in *The Stranger*, for example, is known as an outcast due to his actions and beliefs of life. However, he is a victim of the overpowering impact of light, he loses his way and the shadow of light influences his actions. In his novel, *The Stranger*, Albert Camus creates an intense atmosphere through his use of the sun as a motif. He accomplishes this by using the sun as the personification of Meursault's inner emotions, the powerful imagery of the murder scene, and Meursault's internal conflict.

Throughout the novel, Camus uses the motif of the sun to construct the intensity of the atmosphere during part one of the novel. The sun plays a role in influencing Meursault's feelings especially when the sun is described

as unbearable on the day of Maman's funeral: " But today, with the sun bearing down, making the whole landscape shimmer with heat, it was inhuman and oppressive" (15). Camus uses a pathetic fallacy in his description of the sun as " oppressive" and " inhuman." This helps to illustrate the sun's devilish characteristics as its powerful impact that allows Meursault to forget about Maman's death. Also Meursault is known to be a very indifferent and unemotional character however, whenever the sun is opposing him, it affects his behavior and allows him to express his emotions about his surroundings; and this contributes to the intensity of atmosphere.

Another significant passage is when Meursault longs for shade and to be far away from the oppressive heat: " I was thinking of the cool spring behind the rock. I wanted to hear the murmur of its water again, to escape the sun and the strain...and to find shade at last" (57). This time the sun influences Meursault's yearning desire to run away from the sun and this foreshadows Meursault's desperate actions in killing the Arab. As the sun gets stronger, so does Meursault's discomfort, and this reoccurring relationship symbolizes that the effect of the sun's unbearable heat enhances Meursault's desire to escape its penetrating control. In addition, the powerful strength of the sun returns and it contributes in building up to the climax of the novel: " It was this burning, which made me move forward" (59).

The effect of the sun compels Meursault in killing the Arab with no intentions or reasons influencing his sudden action when his anxiety is released as he pulls the trigger. Camus uses the heat and the glare of the sun as a tool to release Meursault's repressed emotions. Despite Meursault's indifference towards his wrong doings, his actions and emotions, which the sun has

possessed over him, do not explain Meursault's irrational intent to surprisingly shoot the Arab and this connects to a major theme of the irrationality of the universe, which deprives Meursault from acting reasonably. Furthermore, the author's intentions in personifying the sun's possessive effect over Meursault's emotions and irrational motives are to convey an intense atmosphere and its power to influence Meursault's actions.

Towards the end of part one of the novel, the author illustrates the build up to the murder scene through the use of vivid descriptions and kinesthetic and visual imagery of the blazing sun in order to portray an overall atmosphere of the intense portrayals of nature and weather. When Meursault prevents Raymond from starting a bloody war with the Arabs, Raymond gives him the gun and Meursault notices that "The sun glinted off Raymond's gun as he handed it to me"(56). This excerpt foreshadows the significance of the sun and gun since both items are associated with murdering the Arab, and these two items initiate the murder. Camus briefly mentions the sun glinting off the gun as a way to illustrate their connection and importance in the death scene, also the author focuses on pinpointing details about the sun and its powerful effects in order to create an intense atmosphere by emphasizing the sun's visual descriptions.

After the fight between Raymond and the Arab, Meursault takes a walk on the beach and he sees the Arab flashing his knife and this blinds Meursault as he illustrates that "The light shot off the steel and it was like a long flashing blade cutting at my forehead" (59). The author exemplifies the light intensity of the reflection of the blade to be blinding and painful through the use of both kinesthetic and visual imagery. This passage is significant in

demonstrating the powerful effect of the sun and its strength in pushing Meursault to defy the limitations against nature. Even moments before Meursault pulls the trigger, tension begins to rise as if nature is pushing Meursault into killing the Arab: "The sea carried up a thick, fiery breath. It seemed to me as if the sky spilt open from one end to the other to rain down fire" (59). The use of diction such as "thick, fiery" evokes the intensity of visual imagery and the personification of the sun serves to enhance the sun's powerful influence over Meursault's mind and unconscious actions.

Perhaps nature is symbolically pressuring Meursault to murder the Arab and Camus surprisingly illustrates the time and setting of this scene in this way in order for it to come as a shock and therefore to support the concept of nature and its prevalent impact. Overall, the murder scene displays an intense illustration of Meursault's surroundings through the use of kinesthetic and visual imagery of the sun's power and control which helps develop a powerful environment. Particularly, the entire novel is based on the major conflict between Meursault and himself; this internal conflict portrays an intensive atmosphere that is represented through the influence of nature and weather, which is depicted throughout the novel. In the beginning of the novel, the nurse at Mamam's funeral gives Meursault significant advice when she says, "'If you go slowly, you risk getting sunstroke. But if you go too fast, you work up a sweat and then catch a chill inside the church.'" She was right. There was no way out" (17). The nurse's advice symbolizes that Meursault's self-conflict with the sun is unavoidable just as Meursault's fate is inescapable; such as when he fails to find ways to escape from his death sentence.

The author decides to mention this passage to foreshadow Meursault's unforeseen fate because Meursault's murderous action is an unexpected plot twist, and this embodies nature's powerful control over men, in which in this case it is between the sun and Meursault. Meursault's battle with overcoming the heat of the sun is mainly demonstrated especially when tension is high such as when the group of Arabs is walking towards Meursault, Raymond, and Masson: "The sun was shining almost directly overhead onto the sand, and the glare on the water was unbearable" (52). As the scene begins to become more intense, the fight between Meursault and the weather becomes stronger as well, and this is demonstrated when Meursault describes his frustration from the sun's intolerable heat. This excerpt clearly shows that Meursault's constant war with his emotions and nature is powerful in connection with the intense atmosphere and since Meursault is unable to conquer the overpowering heat, it that causes him to kill the Arab and he gives in to the sun's compelling control.

Also before Meursault's trial, he even states that "I knew as soon as the weather turned hot that something new was in store for me" (82). Since Meursault did not know how much longer the judge would sentence him in prison, this passage did foreshadow that his trial would not turn out well. This again relates to the idea that when tension is high, the war between the sun's heat and Meursault's emotions is also intensified and Camus uses the motif of the sun to indicate that nature is against Meursault and to foreshadow Meursault's fate. In conclusion, the influence of nature and weather as well as the motif of the sun and the role it plays to fight against Meursault's internal emotions establishes an intensified setting.

Unfortunately, mankind is overpowered by nature and the force of the light pushes Meursault to his breaking point. Meursault is unaware of the sun's influential effect, however he is impacted by its controlling power. In the end, the sun's strength forces Meursault to commit an immoral crime and even though his reasons are unintentional, he is rejected by society and is sentenced to a death penalty. The use of the motif of the sun in *The Stranger* by Albert Camus, develops a powerful atmosphere through the idea that the sun personifies Meursault by influencing his actions and feelings, the intense imagery of the murder scene, and Meursault's inner conflict against the sun.

Works Cited

Camus, Albert, and Matthew Ward. *The Stranger*. New York: Vintage International, 1989. Print.