

Camus' the guest

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In Camus' short story *The Guest* the main character Daru is a schoolmaster who is charged with delivering an Arab prisoner to the next prison in the East. This essay will seek to explore the psychology behind the protagonist, the writing style of Camus in relating this story to the reader and finally, and most importantly the essay will explore the morality of Daru and the situation which is thrust upon him. Camus creates a landscape of snow in France. In reflection with this landscape the reader may surmise that the protagonist is living a life that is undisturbed, comfortable and is vacant of any hazard.

However, below the surface of the snow there are drifts, holes in which the unsuspecting passerby may fall into and never emerge. Such suggestions are hinted at by Camus when he states that a lot of livestock has already died in this season and some men as well. Thus, although the appearance of the school teacher is one of ease and comfort, there are issues that will arise in the story that will take the reader as well as the protagonist by surprise. The morality of the short story, in short, surrounds the prisoner. The Arab prisoner is the focal point of the theme of morality.

The Arab's own morality can best be described as an amoral character as he split his cousin with a sheering instrument used on sheep and killed him over the debt of wheat the cousin owed the Arab. Thus, the morality in this situation is the morality of providing food for one's family and honoring a debt to one's family. Camus creates a complex situation in which morality isn't a clear cut case of right and wrong, but immerses the reader in more intricate developments of human morality. The Arab has become a prisoner and is given to Daru so that Daru can take him to the prison in the East.

The next moral issue becomes, should Daru take the prisoner to the prison. Daru is a complex character and he doesn't see the need for himself to take the prisoner to the prison. For one thing, he was not involved in any political upheaval, he states that the country is not at war and thus there should be no political prisoners as it were, and lastly he does not see why he should have to take the prisoner to prison. Daru's morality is not subject to petty squabbles of cousins. Daru's morality is a selfish one as well as a complex one.

He does not see why the prisoner is being treated in the fashion he is being treated such as ropes around his hands. In fact, Camus draws the reader's attention to this point with the character Balducci, "' I don't like it either. You don't get used to putting a rope on a man even after years of it, and you're even ashamed, ashamed. But you can't let them have their way. " (Camus paragraph 12). Thus, the morality of the short story encompasses not only Daru's sentiments on prisoners but the common treatment of men as prisoners. The man should be a man first and not a prisoner.

That point is one which Camus seeks to illustrate. He illustrates this point by allowing Daru to treat the Arab as a man first by having him eat dinner, and sitting down with him to eat supper. This last point is one which took the prisoner by surprise as he did not expect to have such treatment from a man in whose possession as a prisoner he was in. Thus, while Daru illustrates common disgust at the man he still treats him like a human. The complexities of morality illustrated by Daru involve the twined disgust he has of the prisoner matched with how he treats him.

Daru shows disgust at the prisoner because the prisoner firstly killed his own cousin, secondly, got caught doing it and lastly because the prisoner chooses to go East toward prisoner of his own volition instead of going South toward freedom with the Nomads. Thus, the morality issue here is how can Daru have such gross sentiments toward a man whom he helps free? The answer is that Camus created a character in whom the commonality of disgust does not interfere with his sense of right and wrong or his sense of morality.