

Existentialist idea in the stranger book



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In the book *The Stranger*, Albert Camus highlights many motifs to show his existentialist ideas. Camus does this by incorporating concepts of isolation, emotionless and sadness into his main character, Meursault. Meursault struggles with fitting in the norms of society and realizing that there is more to life than he believes. Camus highlights his existential ideas through his use of motifs showing how Meursault struggles to show emotion and create meaning of life.

Camus emphasizes his existentialist ideas by characterizing Meursault as an individual who does not have emotions. Camus explains this on the first page of his novel, emphasizing how “Maman died today. Or yesterday maybe, I don’t know” (Camus 3). Meursault describes his outlook on life and his emotional indifference in the first words of the novel. He is so unaware and unemotional that he does not even remember on which day his mother passed away. Also, when after Meursault has killed the Arab and was leaving he explained how he “very nearly held out my hand and said, “Good-by”; just in time I remembered that I’d killed a man” (64). This clarifies how unpassionate and unemotional Meursault truly is. He feels no guilt or pity for the man he has just killed even though he understands that he has committed a crime against the norms of society. Camus chooses to make Meursault an individual who not only is unemotional but also who struggles to find grief for the crimes that he has committed. Camus does this to emphasize the existential idea that nothing matters and that death is something that is bound to happen.

Another way that Camus highlights his existentialist ideas is through isolating Meursault throughout the novel. Meursault explains how he “got

through another Sunday, that Mother now was buried, and tomorrow I'd be going back to work as usual. Really, nothing in my life had changed" (24).

This is illustrating how isolated Meursault is and that nothing has changed because even before his mother's death, he had never been close with her.

After Meursault's mother had died, nothing changed for him because he was always so distant from her and anyone who tried to get close with him.

Meursault was not only distant with his mother, but he also pushed away any other female that tried to enter his life. Meursault explains how " she asked me if I loved her. I said that sort of question had no meaning, really; but I supposed I didn't. She looked sad for a bit" (35).

This emphasizes the idea that Meursault rather live in pure isolation than let anyone new into his life. Camus chooses to isolate and segregate Meursault from society and anyone that tries to get closer with him to exaggerate his ideas of existentialism.

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Additionally, Camus also creates a symbol of the sun, which highlights Meursault's feels and emotions that he struggles to deal with. Right before Meursault kills the Arab, he explains how the sun plays an impact on him and how " It struck me that all I had to do was to turn, walk away, and think no more about it. But the whole beach, pulsing with heat, was pressing on my back." (58). Camus chooses to use the word " but" in this situation to help emphasize the idea that the sun made him turn around and that he would have left if it wasn't for the intense heat of the sun. Meursault also explains how the heat eventually got so " great that it was just as bad staying where I was, under that flood of blinding light falling from the sky. To stay, or to make a move—it came to much" (57). This emphasizes how the sun grows stronger and stronger as the novel goes on. It also highlights how as it grows

stronger, so does Meursault's discomfort. Camus creates the sun as a symbol to change Meursault's actions and emotions. As the novel progresses, Meursault's actions depend more and more on the strength of the sun.

Ultimately, Camus illustrates his existentialist ideas throughout his novel by using motifs. He highlights these ideas through his main character, Meursault, and how Meursault struggles to fit in with societal norms. Camus uses motifs such as symbolism and characterizes Meursault differently to emphasize his belief of a meaningless world.