*The Stranger*

Discussion Questions

1. Does Meursault find value in any part of his life? Which parts and why?
2. Name 2 symbols. For each symbol, give an example (page number and quote) of where the symbol is used within the story and what is represents.
3. In Chapter 6, there are many signs which foreshadow the doom that is about to occur to Meursault. Name at least 3 of these signs of doom, giving a page number, quote, and explanation.
4. Focus on the writing style of the author: why does Camus write about minute details of Meursault’s life, such as his boring Sunday? What kind of sentence structure does he use and what effect does this have on the reader and the story?
5. In 1 well written and fully developed paragraph, explain how The Stranger and its protagonist Meursault, reflect 1 of the theories/philosophies (Existentialism, Absurdism, Nihilism) discussed in class. Give 2 specific examples from the story and clearly explain how they depict that philosophy.
6. How is Camus’ chosen title significant as a characterization of Meursault? How is Meursault a stranger (estranged)? To whom is he a stranger?
7. Why does Meursault shoot the Arab? Does the death of his mother (Maman) have any bearing on his later action?
8. Explore the natural environments in the novel and how and why the characters, specifically Meursault, come into contact with them. Is man estranged from nature?
9. Camus claims, “Man is alone, and thus confronted with nothing but himself”. Discuss the presence /significance of this claim in terms of Meursault.
10. Camus wrote, “Live to the point of tears.” Discuss this in terms of Meursault and the novel.
11. What role does Meursault’s relationship with Marie play in Camus’ characterization of Meursault?
12. Overall, is Meursault mentally sound? Do you see him as an unstable character/person? Explain.
13. How does the weather, and in particular, the sun, affect Meursault’s mood and behavior? Why do you suppose it has any effect at all? Can Meursault truly believe that the scorching sun is a valid excuse for murdering the Arab?
14. *The Stranger* is divided into two parts – what is the effect of such a structure? Do you see any structure created – outside of the two parts – that is marked by the three deaths of the text?
15. Camus was a self-proclaimed "absurdist." Based on *The Stranger* and Meursault’s beliefs in *The Stranger*, how would you define "the absurd"? What role do concepts like "detachment," "alienation," "acceptance," and "society" play? How is absurdity reflected in (a) the events in Meursault’s life, (b) the relationships Meursault finds himself in, and (c) the attitudes with which Meursault faces, and subsequently rejects, the world?
16. How does Meursault change as an individual from the beginning of the book to the very end? How do we see these changes? Are Meursault’s thoughts and feelings about death, for example, noticeably different by the end of the text? What about religion? Women?
17. So, we’ve got all these relationships going on here: Meursault and Maman, Meursault and Marie, Salamano and his dog, Maman and Perez, Meursault and Raymond, and Raymond and his mistress. Which would you say is the most loving? Deep? Loyal? Casual? Sexual? Complex? Rooted in friendship and companionship? Indifferent? Uninteresting? Shallow? Sad? Other adjective?
18. In what sense does Meursault triumph at the end of *The Stranger*? (This was what Camus intended, but you’re welcome to argue that, in fact, Meursault doesn’t triumph at all.) Does Meursault overcome society’s judgment, and thereby, its shackles? Or is it more important that he rebelled against conformity? And what’s up with him wishing for a large crowd of hating spectators at his execution?
19. Does Mersault change as a character or stay the same? What effect does the change, or lack of change, have on the story?
20. Describe how textual details reveal complexities in character’s relationships with one another- specifically Mersault and Marie.
21. What function does setting have in this story? Think about the beach, the prison cell, the prisoners visiting room, Mersault’s apartment, etc.
22. Explain the function of a particular sequence of events in the plot. Think about Raymond and Mersault, the events on the day of the shooting, or even the events that the court lays out as evidence against Mersault.
23. Identify and explain the function of imagery in this story. Be able to give an example and support it.