

# THE STRANGER SALON

## **SALON QUESTION:**

Explain how specific examples in Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and Camus' *The Stranger* illustrate existentialism.

## **ASSESSMENT AREAS**

### **PRE SALON NOTES**

- A quotation from *The Metamorphosis* that illustrates existentialism and an explanation of how the quotation illustrates existentialism.
- A quotation from *The Stranger* that illustrates existentialism and an explanation of how the quotation illustrates existentialism.
- one written example from the world outside the novels that relates to your two examples of existentialism.
- Responses to existential activities #1-8.

### **ORAL RESPONSES DURING THE SALON**

#### **SALON ESSAY**

The grade for the essay salon will be based on overall organization, three quotations that are analyzed using a literary tool, and a demonstration of a clear philosophical understanding of existentialism.

## **POINTS TO CONSIDER WHEN PREPARING FOR THIS SALON**

- anti-hero: A protagonist who lacks traditional heroic virtues and noble qualities and is sometimes inept, cowardly, stupid, or dishonest, yet sensitive.
- Camus on Meursault: "Meursault for me is a poor and naked man, in love with the sun which leaves no shadows. He is far from being totally deprived of sensitivity for he is animated by a passion, profound because it is tacit, the passion for the absolute and for truth. It is still a negative truth, the truth of being and feeling, but a truth without which no conquest of the self or of the world is possible. That is why, until the very end, Meursault is the man who answers but never asks a question, and all his answers so alarm a society which cannot bear to look at the truth."
- Along with the title, Camus took care in naming the main character. Meursault's name is symbolic of the Mediterranean. Mer means "sea" and Soliel is French for "sun." The sea and sun meet at the beach, where Meursault's fateful act occurs.
- Do you agree that *The Stranger* is the best translation for the title of this work? The United Kingdom title is *The Outsider*.
- Meursault is the archetype of a middle-class man. He works as a clerk, rents an apartment, and draws no attention to himself. He is, if anything, ordinary. Meursault might even be boring. He lacks deep convictions and passion. If he is estranged from any aspect of French society, it is religion -- he does not believe in the symbols and rituals of faith.
- Is the main character estranged? "Cela m'est égal" Meursault views life as one might a movie. No matter what occurs, "It's all the same to me." He is not a stranger, but rather an observer without an emotional connection to the world."
- "You will never be happy if you continue to search for what happiness consists of. You will never live if you are looking for the meaning of life." --Albert Camus
- Critic Bruce Jackson argues, "Meursault realizes there is no escape, that his sentence of death differs from everyone's sentence only in that his has a specific date and style."
- Knowing that Camus opposed the death penalty, there are several questions regarding the execution of Meursault. Was the execution a comment upon society? Was it a rejection of someone lacking the same morals as his society? Or was the execution a form of suicide?
- The feeling of the absurd results from one's recognition of the simple fact that one is under a sentence of death. As soon as one is born, there moves toward him from "the dark horizon" of the future a single certainty--he must die. No matter how good or how important, how rich or how poor, how useful or how vile; every man is under that sentence. So long as one maintains belief in God, in an after life, there is no difficulty, for death is simply a stage in a larger process. But if one does not believe in God, as Meursault does not, the problem presents itself.
- If the only guarantee one has is the guarantee of meaningless death, why should one not commit suicide or murder? Why should one not end it all now and avoid years of waiting, years of living under lies of conduct that have no meaning? Camus finds value in the process of living itself.
- Camus: The gods had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight. They had thought with some reason that there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor. *The Myth of Sisyphus*, ch. 4 (1942)