

The Stranger Book Notes

The Stranger by Albert Camus

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Author/Context

Albert Camus (1913-1960)

Born in Mondovi, Algeria in 1913 to working class parents, Albert Camus lived a youth of Muslim faith and solidarity. His father, a staunch French patriot, left home in 1914 when Camus was a baby to fight for France in the First World War. He was killed in battle, leaving his illiterate wife to raise Albert and his older brother alone. With the help of her mother, Madame Camus influenced her son's future career, as he later wrote frequently about mother-son relationships (and very infrequently about father-son relations). At the age of 17, Albert came down with a severe case of tuberculosis and was forced to leave home and begin his life exploring independence and a solitary existence. He studied hard and graduated from the university with a degree in philosophy with the goal of becoming a teacher. Camus took up work as a journalist, spent time in the theater, and wrote several controversial essays about Muslims in Europe. He had a short-lived (two year) marriage to Simone Hie and joined the French Resistance against the Nazis during World War 2.

With such personal and individual development, Camus found a niche in the world of existential thinking. According to Encarta Encyclopedia, existentialism is an overt emphasis on individual existence, and consequently a focus and challenge on subjectivity, individual freedom, and choice. Perhaps because Camus ventured into the world at a young age and found himself involved with the politics of World War 2, did he write so eloquently in this realm of literature and philosophy.

Camus died suddenly in a car accident in Paris in 1960, truncating a successful and influential career as a teacher, writer, journalist, playwright, and thinker. His library of work includes his first and most famous, *The Stranger*, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *The Plague*, *The Fall*, *The Rebel*, *A Happy Death*, *Exile and the Kingdom*, *Caligula* and *Three Other*, *The Possessed*, *Resistance*, *Rebellion*, and *Death*, *Notebooks 1935-1942*, *Notebooks 1942-1951*, *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, and *Cashiers I*. His political essays and contribution to literature and philosophy have placed him amongst such company as Plato, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard, and several of his quotations have even become staples in political speeches and personal salutations.

"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."

It is such language as this quotation that places Camus in the foreground of academia and philosophy. Camus' works have been translated from their original French into countless languages and are studied in philosophy classes across universities around the world. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1957.



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Plot Summary

The book opens as Meursault recalls his mother's death. Maman dies prior to the opening, yet, Meursault cannot remember exactly when, why, or any information of related significance. He thinks of his mother in a distant emotional state and continues about with his daily life, as if nothing has changed since her death. The only difference in his life is that he must proceed with the normal actions of mourning and funerals.

Meursault visits the home, in which he placed Maman prior to her death (an inexact time ago), speaks with the caretaker about life, his mother, and smokes a cigarette. At the funeral, he looks around at the beautiful sunny day and wishes he were at home in bed in Algiers. He also observes the feeble old man, Monsieur Perez, who loved Maman, struggle to help carry her coffin to its burial plot.

The day after the funeral, Meursault takes a bus to the public beach, where he meets up with Marie Cardona, a beautiful young secretary from his company. They had flirted in the past, and without much delay, jump into bed together. After spending the day splashing around in the ocean and going to a movie (a comedy), Marie returns to Meursault's apartment where they make love. As they soon begin to spend much time together, Marie asks Meursault if he loves her. Meursault likes her, but sees nothing special about her or any woman in general. He will marry her if she wants, but according to him, nothing matters that much.

Meursault returns to work and his mundane life. He is reprimanded by his boss for having little drive and motivation, and passes some time with co-worker and friend, Emmanuel. He speaks with his downstairs neighbor, Salamano, who lives alone with his beloved spaniel dog. The dog suffers from a rare skin disease that covers his and his master's skin in scabs. Salamano eventually loses his dog, leaving him lonely and broken-hearted. Another neighbor, with whom Meursault becomes friends is Raymond Sintes. A short, stalker man, he condones violent outbursts towards women and openly beats his ex-girlfriend who is an Arab and who he believes to have cheated on him. Raymond and Meursault discuss their lack of emotions and past relationships, understanding the apathetic, cold, and indifferent personalities that they share.

One day, Raymond brings Meursault and Marie to the beach to visit his friend, Masson. They see a group of Arabs following them (including the brother of Raymond's ex-girlfriend). Near a stream at the edge of the beach, the Arabs fight the three men, and run off. After the three men return to Masson's cottage and their respective female companions, Meursault returns to the beach with Raymond's gun. He comes across the same Arab as before, and before much provocation shoots him once. After he falls, Meursault shoots him three more times.

Meursault is arrested and put in jail to await trial. He speaks with a magistrate, several policemen, and his defense attorney. While in trial, he gets to know his surroundings and is forced to contemplate his life, his worth, and his actions. He changes little and



still cannot believe that he is on trial for murder. Marie visits him in prison, still hoping to marry him when he is released.

When the case begins months later, it is a media circus. Meursault observes his surroundings and sees every person he knows in court. The prosecuting and defense attorneys call them to testify on his character. Although all express their friendship and connection with Meursault fairly and in a positive light, it is Marie's testimony that ultimately destroys Meursault's credibility. The prosecuting attorney persistently describes Meursault's indifference towards his mother's death as monstrous and apathetic. So, when Marie explains that they began their relationship immediately after the funeral proceedings, the judges and jury and audience members are convinced that Meursault is truly the unfeeling monster that the prosecutor makes him out to be.

Meursault is convicted of premeditated murder and sentenced to public execution by guillotine. While Meursault awaits his doom, he returns to prison and is forced to pass the time and think, again, of his life and actions. He is not changed. The prison chaplain enters to speak with him, to urge him to find God and salvation. Meursault still does not believe in God and finds the man frustrating and annoying. He grabs hold of him and begins to yell until the prison guards restrain him.

When the day of his execution arrives, Meursault understands Maman's actions and feelings prior to her death. He thinks that maybe he could live another life. Regardless, he is excited about the day. He walks out to the guillotine hoping that everyone cheers loudly for his death.



Major Characters

Monsieur Meursault: Meursault, the central character in the novel, is a young Frenchman, who commits murder and contemplates life while on trial. A detached, observant, and indifferent man, Meursault is constantly under scrutiny by society surrounding him. Likewise, he constantly observes his surroundings. His mother dies before the novel begins, and his apathy towards her death and her funeral cause future strife for him. Immediately after her death, he goes about his daily life, as if it were normal. Immediately after the funeral, he goes to the beach and meets up with Marie Cardona, a woman from his office. They become intimately involved from that moment on. He returns home, speaks with his neighbors, and soon develops a quick friendship with Raymond Sintes, who beats his Arab ex-mistress. Weeks later, while on the beach, they encounter a group of Arabs, including the brother of his beaten ex-girlfriend, fight, and leave. Meursault returns to the beach later that day and shoots the Arab in cold blood four times. He is put in trial for murder and eventually sentenced to death by public execution. While on trial, he observes the courtroom, recollects on his past relationships, and comes to terms with his actions. Meursault ultimately does not believe in God, is frustrated with every person in his life, and welcomes death openly.

Maman: Although Maman is not a living character in the novel, her presence is felt throughout. Meursault had put her in a home, where she lived out her remaining days. It is his seeming uncaring relationship with her - his mother - that sets in motion society's negative image of his personality.

Raymond Sintes: Raymond Sintes is Meursault's friend and the peripheral cause of his trial. Raymond is a cold man who, like Meursault, keeps his distance from most people. Raymond believes that women should not only be put in their place, but also deserve beatings for their malevolent actions. When Raymond beats his ex-girlfriend, the conflict begins. The group of Arab men follows the two men around until the final showdown by the stream at the beach. Raymond testifies in Meursault's favor; but his words cannot help. Meursault is ultimately convicted of murder.

Marie Cardona: Marie is the woman with whom Meursault is intimately involved. She declares her love for him on several occasions and expresses her desire to marry him. She visits him in prison and testifies in his favor. However, again, it is Meursault's relationship with her that aids in his ultimate conviction. The fact remains that Meursault started a relationship with Marie the day after his mother's funeral. Meursault cares for Marie, but not in the same way that she cares for him. To Meursault, Marie is just a woman, a body, who cares about him - nothing special.

Minor Characters

The caretaker: The caretaker of the funeral home speaks with Meursault after Maman passes away. They discuss life and death, and share coffee and a cigarette. When the



caretaker testifies at Meursault's trial, the afternoon they shared place Meursault in a negative light.

Celeste: Celeste is the owner of the restaurant that Meursault frequents. He testifies favorably for Meursault at his trial, with words that make Meursault openly emotional and grateful.

Monsieur Perez: Monsieur Perez is Maman's male companion prior to her death. He is a sweet, feeble old man, who struggles during Maman's funeral and aids with the other pallbearers in carrying her coffin to its burial.

Emmanuel: Emmanuel is a friend of Meursault's from work. They spend some time together, seeing movies and talking. He only enters the novel in the beginning and at the end during the trial.

Salamano: Salamano is Meursault's downstairs neighbor. Although he lives alone and seems like a sad, depressive soul, he has a large heart completely devoted to his dog. The spaniel suffers from a skin disease that covers his (and Salamano's) skin with scabs. The authorities eventually take away Salamano's dog, and he cries every night from longing. Salamano also testifies for Meursault in the trial.

The Arab: Although the Arab plays a small role in the novel, like Maman, his presence is strongly felt. Because Raymond beats his sister, he and his friends follow Raymond and Meursault to the beach and start a fight. Meursault returns later in the day and shoots him. After he falls on the ground seeming dead, Meursault shoots him three more times.

Masson: Masson is a friend of Raymond's who lives on the beach during the weekends with his wife. A friendly man, he goes swimming with Meursault and Raymond, and eventually testifies for him at the trial.

The prosecutor: The prosecuting attorney is a man with a fiery tongue and powerful presence. Meursault often believes him to be a better lawyer than his own defense attorney. He attacks Meursault's character by persistently bringing up his indifference to Maman's death and his relationship with Marie so soon after her funeral. The prosecutor ultimately wins, for Meursault is convicted of premeditated murder and is sentenced to a public execution.

The defense attorney: The defense attorney works diligently on Meursault's case and humors the jury by making fun of the prosecutor's allegations. He calls several character witnesses in Meursault's favor, but ultimately loses the case.

The chaplain: The prison chaplain repeatedly comes to speak with Meursault, hoping to elicit some sort of emotion and religious sentiment. He persists on a final try, questioning Meursault's reasoning and devotion, confused as to why he cannot feel remorse. Meursault is annoyed with the chaplain's persistence and eventually grabs him, screaming about all sorts of statements of indifference and relations and past mistakes. The prison guards are forced to restrain Meursault from harming the chaplain.



The magistrate: The magistrate enters prison to speak with Meursault at the beginning of his trial. He thrusts a crucifix in Meursault's face, begging him to find salvation. Meursault does not comply.



Objects/Places

Algiers: Algiers is the city in Algeria where Meursault lives. He misses his bed and comfortable home when away at Maman's funeral and even more, during the trial.

Celeste's: Celeste's restaurant is the café where Meursault generally eats his Sunday morning breakfast and drinks his regular coffee. He goes there the morning after Maman's death and escapes from it when he wants to be inconspicuous.

The beach: Marie and Meursault run to the beach together after Maman's funeral. They swim in the water and run back to Meursault's apartment to make love. When lonely, Meursault thinks back to his time on the beach with Marie. The beach is also the site of the murder. It is on the sand near a stream that the Arabs fight with Raymond, Masson, and Meursault, and it is the same place at the beach to which Meursault returns and shoots the Arab.

The courtroom: A majority of the second portion of the novel takes place in the courtroom. Meursault observes all aspects of the room, the people inside the room, and the men of letters.

The prison: Meursault spends his remaining days in prison, struggling to keep sane. He passes time in his cell by thinking of the dawn, of his self, his self-importance, Maman, and Marie. He sleeps as much as possible, eats, and continues to read a single clip from a newspaper repeatedly. It is in prison, that Meursault is forced to think about his actions...and ultimate apathy towards them.



Quotes

Quote 1: "Maman died today. Or yesterday maybe, I don't know. I got a telegram from the home: 'Mother deceased. Funeral tomorrow. Faithfully yours.' That doesn't mean anything. Maybe it was yesterday." Part 1, Chapter 1, pg. 3

Quote 2: "It had been a long time since I'd been out in the country, and I could feel how much I'd enjoy going for a walk if it hadn't been for Maman." Part 1, Chapter 1, pg. 12

Quote 3: "It occurred to me that anyway one more Sunday was over that Maman was buried now, that I was going back to work, and that, really, nothing had changed." Part 1, Chapter 2, pg. 24

Quote 4: "He [Raymond] asked if I thought she was cheating on him, and it seemed to me she was; if I thought she should be punished and what I would do in his place, and I said you can't ever be sure, but I understood his wanting to punish her." Part 1, Chapter 3, pg. 32

Quote 5: "I got up. Raymond gave me a very firm handshake and said that men always understand each other. I left his room, closing the door behind me, and paused for a minute in the dark, on the landing. The house was quiet, and a breath of dark, dank air wafted p from deep in the stairwell. All I could hear was the blood pounding in my ears. I stood there, motionless." Part 1, Chapter 3, pg. 33

Quote 6: "She was wearing a pair of my pajamas with the sleeves rolled up. When she laughed I wanted her again. A minute later she asked me if I loved her. I told her it didn't mean anything but that I didn't think so. She looked sad. But as we were fixing lunch, and for no apparent reason, she laughed in such a way that I kissed her." Part 1, Chapter 4, pg. 35

Quote 7: "I would rather not have upset him, but I couldn't see any reason to change my life. Looking back on it, I wasn't unhappy. When I was a student, I had lots of ambitions like that. But when I had to give up my studies I learned very quickly that none of it really mattered." Part 1, Chapter 5, pg. 41

Quote 8: "For the first time maybe, I really thought I was going to get married." Part 1, Chapter 6, pg. 50

Quote 9: "We [Raymond and Meursault] stared at each other without blinking, and everything came to a stop there between the sea, the sand, and the sun, and the double silence of the flute and the water. It was then that I realized that you could either shoot or not shoot." Part 1, Chapter 6, pg. 56

Quote 10: "The scorching blade slashed at my eyelashes and stabbed at my stinging eyes. That's when everything began to reel. The sea carried up a thick, fiery breath. It seemed to me as if the sky split open from one end to the other to rain down fire. My



whole being tensed and I squeezed my hand around the revolver. The trigger gave; I felt the smooth underside of the butt; and there, in that noise, sharp and deafening at the same time, is where I tall started. I shook off the sweat and sun. I knew that I had shattered the harmony of the day, the exceptional silence of a beach where I'd been happy. Then I fired four more times at the motionless body where the bullets lodged without leaving a trace. And it was like knocking four quick times on the door of unhappiness." Part 1, Chapter 6, pg. 59

Quote 11: "On my way out, I was even going to shake his [the policeman's] hand, but just in time, I remembered that I had killed a man." Part 2, Chapter 1, pg. 64

Quote 12: "And I can say that at the end of the eleven months that this investigation lasted, I was almost surprised that I had ever enjoyed anything other than those rare moments when the judge would lead me to the door of his office, slap me on the shoulder, and say to me cordially, 'That's all for today, Monsieur Antichrist.' I would then be handed back over to the police." Part 2, Chapter 1, pg. 71

Quote 13: "At that time, I often thought that if I had had to live in the trunk of a dead tree, with nothing to do but look up at the sky flowing overhead, little by little I would have gotten used to it." Part 2, Chapter 2, pg. 77

Quote 14: "And the more I thought about it, the more I dug out my memory things I had overlooked or forgotten. I realized then that a man who had lived only one day could easily live for a hundred years in prison. He would have enough memories to keep him from being bored. In a way, it was an advantage." Part 2, Chapter 2, pg. 79

Quote 15: "...for the first time in years, I had this stupid urge to cry, because I could feel how much all these people hated me." Part 2, Chapter 3, pg. 90

Quote 16: "The spectators laughed. And my lawyer, rolling up one of his sleeves, said with finality, 'Here we have a perfect reflection of this entire trial: everything is true and nothing is true!'" Part 2, Chapter 3, pg. 91

Quote 17: "They [the jury] had before them the basest of crimes, a crime made worse than sordid by the fact that they were dealing with a monster, a man without morals." Part 2, Chapter 3, pp. 95-96

Quote 18: "Yes, it was the hour when, a long time ago, I was perfectly content. What awaited me back then was always a night of easy, dreamless sleep. And yet something has changed, since it was back to my cell that I went to wait for the next day...as if familiar paths traced in summer skies could lead as easily to prison as to the sleep of the innocent." Part 2, Chapter 3, pg. 97.

Quote 19: "In a way, they seemed to be arguing the case as if it had nothing to do with me. Everything was happening without my participation. My fate was being decided without anyone so much as asking my opinion." Part 2, Chapter 4, pg. 98



Quote 20: "But all the long speeches, all the interminable days and hours that people had spent talking about my soul, had left me with the impression of a colorless swirling river that was making me dizzy." Part 2, Chapter 4, pg. 104

Quote 21: "The presiding judge told me in a bizarre language that I was to have my head cut off in a public square in the name of the French people. Then it seemed to me that I suddenly knew what was on everybody's fact. It was a look of consideration, I'm sure. The policemen were very gentle with me. The lawyer put his hand on my wrist. I wasn't thinking about anything anymore. But the presiding judge asked me if I had anything to say. I thought about it. I said, 'No.'" Part 2, Chapter 4, pg. 107

Quote 22: "How had I not seen that there was nothing more important than an execution, and that when you come right down to it, it was the only thing a man could truly be interested in?" Part 2, Chapter 5, pg. 110

Quote 23: "The chaplain knew the game well too, I could tell right away: his gaze never faltered. And his voice didn't falter, either, when he said, 'Have you no hope at all? And do you really live with the thought that when you die, you die, and nothing remains?' 'Yes,' I said." Part 2, Chapter 5, pg. 117

Quote 24: "'I am on your side. But you have no way of knowing it, because our heart is blind.'" Part 2, Chapter 5, pg. 120

Quote 25: "As if that blind rage has washed me clean, rid me of hope; for the first time, I that night alive with signs and stars, I opened myself to the gentle indifference of the world. Finding it so much life myself - so like a brother, really - I felt that I had been happy and that I was happy again. For everything to be consummated, for me to feel less alone, I had only to wish that there be a large crowd of spectators the day of my execution and that they greet me with cries of hate." Part 2, Chapter 5, pg. 122-3



Topic Tracking: Death

Death 1: The novel begins with Meursault recalling his mother's death. He does not remember specifically the day on which she died. He simply remembers that she died recently and he must now go about with the funeral processions.

Death 2: At Maman's funeral, Meursault begins to think about death. He wonders if all the people in attendance actually cared for his mother or are simply going along with the necessary actions placed on them by society. He wonders if her dead body lying before them has any importance or influence on their lives, or if she is simply just another dead body laying before them.

Death 3: Marie is shocked to learn of Maman's death (and consequently Meursault's) loss. She realizes how soon his mother died and is momentarily confused as to why Meursault is both at the beach and spending time with her. However, she soon forgets this tragic fact and jumps in bed with Meursault. Although she is saddened by the idea of death, she too does not let it affect her actions.

Death 4: When Raymond uncovers the gun he brought to the beach, Meursault is initially surprised. He knows that it is an instrument of death. However, when he tells Raymond that he should take the gun from him, he realizes the imminence and possibility of death. All he has to do is shoot and life is over.

Death 5: With the distractions of the heat and the light reflecting off of the Arab's blade, Meursault pulls the trigger of Raymond's gun. He plays the role of God and takes away someone else's life. However, immediately after shooting the Arab, he places three more bullets in the body lying on the ground. Death does not seem a daunting task to attempt, when someone else is the receiver.

Death 6: The magistrate cannot understand Meursault's reaction to the Arab's death. He shoots the Arab, the Arab falls down on the sand dead. However, Meursault continues to shoot him three more times. It is this post mortal shooting that disturbs not only the magistrate, but also the jury. Why, after he is already dead, does Meursault continue to shoot the Arab? Not even he can answer that question.

Death 7: The one newspaper clip that Meursault reads and rereads while in prison is loosely about death. A man returns home after years away and is murdered. His family dies tragically soon afterwards. It is this story that keeps Meursault occupied during his long time in solitude.

Death 8: The judge hands Meursault a death sentence upon declaration of his guilt. Meursault initially has trouble understanding why he must die, but also understands that he inflicted death upon another person. The sentence mandates that Meursault is to be beheaded by a guillotine.



Death 9: Meursault wonders if Marie is alive or dead. When he thinks that she may be dead, he does not care at all about her. He echoes the same sentiment to his impending doom and would not expect anyone to care about him if he were dead.

Death 10: Meursault begins to understand his mother's feelings and emotions towards the end of her life. He sees the end of his life coming immediately and feels strangely prepared. After he attacks the chaplain, it is almost as if he is ready to welcome death and understand Maman.



Topic Tracking: Detachment

Detachment 1: When Meursault recalls his mother's death, he elicits little to no emotion of her memory. He feels detached from her life, her death, and her entire being, for he had previously put her in a home. He is detached, both emotionally and physically, from his mother; so, when she passes away, nothing truly changes in his life.

Detachment 2: Meursault is initially apprehensive about speaking with the caretaker so soon after his mother's death. He is even more concerned about drinking and smoking a cigarette in front of her dead body. However, he soon forgets both her presence and his attachment towards her, and lights a cigarette.

Detachment 3: Although Meursault's body is present at his mother's burial plot, his mind is elsewhere. He can think of only his home in Algiers and his desire to be in bed, as opposed to standing outside in the heat. He is quite detached from the idea of a funeral, and rather sees the afternoon as an annoying day outside.

Detachment 4: When Meursault and Raymond meet and begin to talk, they realize that they share the same detachment sentiment about humanity and relationships. Raymond understands Meursault's mentality of not openly speaking about his mother's death and his emotions (or lack thereof) with Marie. They share the feeling of wanting to be alone, without others disturbing their solidarity.

Detachment 5: When Raymond beats his ex-girlfriend, Meursault is slightly shocked. Still, he and Raymond feel no remorse for having inflicted violence on another human being. After the matter has passed and Meursault promises to support Raymond with the police, the two men fall back into the same state of thought as before. They seem detached and indifferent from the fighting and violence.

Detachment 6: After Meursault's boss calls him into his office to criticize his work ethic and lack of professional motivation, Meursault returns to his desk and continues on with his work as if nothing had happened. Where a typical response would be fear or sadness, Meursault is indifferent. It matters little to him whether he works for the company or not.

Detachment 7: Only after the police begin to question him, does Meursault realize that he has, in fact, killed a man. He does not understand why the police continue to question him and feels detached from the current legal situation.

Detachment 8: Meursault feels distant from Marie when he sees her briefly during visiting hours. He believes that he could get used to any type of life, regardless of the constraints and frustration, without friendship, without family. Those "extra" portions of life are detached from what he considers to be important.

Detachment 9: Meursault has difficulty understanding his connection with the case. When the court proceedings begin, he often feels detached and distant from his body



and entire self. He wonders about the murderer on trial and suddenly remembers that it is he who is on trial and must deal with the consequences of his actions.

Detachment 10: Marie's testimony is the ultimate clincher in Meursault's case that illustrates his detachment. Her words prove - to the court - that Meursault engaged in happy, sensual actions immediately following his mother's death. According to the court, this detached sentiment seems flawless proof of his guilt.

Detachment 11: As the trial concludes and the lawyers present their summations, Meursault listens as if he is just another member of the audience. He has difficulty understanding and believing that it is he who is on trial.



Topic Tracking: Observation

Observation 1: Meursault looks around at his mother's funeral service and observes the elderly. He looks closely at Monsieur Perez, the old ladies chewing their gums, and the 'typical' funeral scene. Although he observes these images and people, he does not form emotionally attached opinions. He simply states descriptions and his immediate sentiment regarding them - both hot and cold.

Observation 2: At the café, Meursault looks around and observes the happy couples flirting outside. He notices every living creature in nature, from the birds to the trees around him. When he goes home, he turns this inspection inward as he looks at his reflection in the mirror. Noticing some old bread laying around his room, he realizes that life is back to normal. He must return to work the following day.

Observation 3: Marie and Meursault dine at Celeste's. While eating, Meursault looks around and observes a single woman eating at a nearby table. He scrutinizes her behavior, from her calculation of the tip to her perusal of a long magazine. When she leaves, he soon forgets about her.

Observation 4: When Meursault returns to the same place on the beach, he unwillingly observes his surroundings. While he normally looks around and takes in every detail, this time, the surrounding details seem to overtake him. The beating sun shines down on him, the heat overwhelms him, and the reflection of the blade cause him to see the world through different eyes. He is not observing the Arab through his typical view; instead, he simply sees a man with a knife and feels he must stop him from attacking.

Observation 5: Meursault gets used to his prison surroundings, observing every crack in the wall and all the people around him. During visiting day, he looks out at the sea of women screaming at their respective loved ones locked up inside with him. He notices their faces, their emotions, and their words, and wonders about their relationships. He also sees Marie and contemplates his relationship with her.

Observation 6: While in prison, Meursault has little to observe. So, he turns his tendency to observe the intricacies of the outside world inside his memories. He thinks back to beautiful sunny days on the beach and his apartment and realizes that these memories can keep him satisfied for years in prison.

Observation 7: Meursault looks around the court to observe the formalities. He sees the two lawyers, the three judges, each dressed in red and black, and then his friends - the witnesses. He scrutinizes every minute detail of the scene from the court reporters to the firm handshakes between lawyers.

Observation 8: When court is called back into session, Meursault walks in and observes the same environment as before. He notices the same faces, the same judges, jurors, and witnesses. He continues listening to the case, as if here were not the man on trial.



Observation 9: When court is adjourned, Meursault feels the sun and heat on his body. It makes him return to his inner observations - his memories. He recalls a time when he was truly happy, outside, and free from this frustration.

Observation 10: When Meursault is found guilty of murder, he is returned to his prison cell to await execution. He observes the prison environment again and the idea of an execution. He recalls a story of his father attending an execution. In his observations, he realizes that there are few public records of executions.

Observation 11: Meursault passes the time in prison by observing his surroundings again. He especially thinks during dawn, when the sun is over the horizon, shining clarity onto the land below. He observes nature at this time. He also takes this time to observe his own appeal - others and himself.



Part 1, Chapter 1

The novel begins as Meursault reports on his Maman's (mother's) death. Detached and confused, he continues on with his normal life. He does go through with the expected actions of mourning, the routine of the funeral, and soon closes his mind on the past few weeks.

"Maman died today. Or yesterday maybe, I don't know. I got a telegram from the home: 'Mother deceased. Funeral tomorrow. Faithfully yours.' That doesn't mean anything. Maybe it was yesterday." Part 1, Chapter 1, pg. 3

Topic Tracking: Death 1

Topic Tracking: Detachment 1

Meursault eats at his regular restaurant, Celeste's, runs to catch the bus, and ultimately visits the funeral home, where he discusses Maman's lack of religious thought and pending burial with the caretaker. When Meursault stares at the attending nurse, the caretaker explains that she has an abscess, which is the reason her face is wrapped in white bandages. Meursault is anxious and frustrated with the caretaker's questions and apprehensive attitude towards him and his mother's body's presence. The caretaker dispels his life story onto Meursault until nightfall. He brings coffee and cigarettes to the conversation, and although Meursault desires a cigarette, he does not feel comfortable smoking one because of his mother's body sitting in their presence. He soon forgets and proceeds to smoke with the caretaker as they sit vigil. Nothing seems to matter to him.

Topic Tracking: Detachment 2

As more people pile into the vigil, Meursault examines their every motion, movement, and sound. He sees the nurse from afar, he looks at the old women sobbing over their lost friend, analyzes the grotesque picture of the bulging stomachs of the elderly, and becomes annoyed by their subconscious sounds of the sucking in of their cheeks. He wonders if the dead body before them - his mother - actually means anything to these people, or if they are just acting as they are supposed to: as mourners who have lost something dear to them.

Topic Tracking: Death 2

Meursault dozes off and awakens every now and then. By morning, the mourners had slowly paid their respects by shaking his hand and leaving. He does not understand why they do such a bizarre and meaningless action, but follows along with the charade nonetheless. He looks outside at the beautiful-day-to-be and is upset, not because of his loss, but rather because of the imposition it places on his life. "It had been a long time since I'd been out in the country, and I could feel how much I'd enjoy going for a walk if it hadn't been for Maman" Part 1, Chapter 1, pg. 12.



Meursault goes to church to speak with the priest about the burial. As he and the others follow with the grand procession from church through the outside village and to the burial plot, Meursault notices every minute detail in nature and in his surrounding company. Monsieur Perez, his mother's new love, aids with the other pallbearers in carrying the coffin. They are all much younger and more resilient than he, allowing his weak and feeble disposition to shine. Meursault notices Perez's slight limp that forces him to lag behind the rest of the pallbearers. The sweat on his face is trapped by his plethora of wrinkles, and he eventually collapses on the ground from the intense heat.

Topic Tracking: Observation 1

Detached and indifferent, Meursault sees the brown earth cover his mother's casket, and can think of only one thing. He is annoyed by the sounds of the village and simply wants to sleep in his own bed in Algiers as soon as the service is over.

Topic Tracking: Detachment 3

Part 1, Chapter 2

Meursault awakens a day later and suddenly realizes why his boss was frustrated with him for asking for two extra days off. It is Sunday, so requesting time off on a weekend made no sense. Meursault tries to rationalize to himself that it is not his fault that they buried Maman on a Saturday. Nonetheless, he accepts this misunderstanding and continues with his day. He does not want to go to Celeste's, his normal lunch restaurant because he does not want to deal with extra questions about his mother from Celeste. He decides to go to the public beach for a swim. While there, he sees Marie Cardona, a typist from his office with whom he wants an affair. The two spend the day together. Upon discovering Meursault's very recent loss, Marie is shocked and saddened. However, the tragedy is soon forgotten when the two see a late movie (a comedy), and make love in Meursault's bed. When he awakens the following day, Marie is gone. He realizes that he dislikes Sundays intensely for many of these such reasons.

Topic Tracking: Death 3

Looking around at his apartment, Meursault realizes that it is now too big for him alone. It seemed the perfect size while Maman was living there, but now there is too much room. Still hungry, he goes to another café - an unknown, hidden place - at which he will have to speak with nobody and explain nothing about Maman. As he smokes cigarettes and eats a piece of chocolate, he looks around at the street lamps, the men and women flirting and giggling together, and the trees around the area. He buys some bread and goes home. When he looks in the mirror, he sees his lamp and a few stray pieces of bread from days earlier. "It occurred to me that anyway one more Sunday was over that Maman was buried now, that I was going back to work, and that, really, nothing had changed" Part 1, Chapter 2, pg. 24.

Topic Tracking: Observation 2



Part 1, Chapter 3

Back at work on Monday, Meursault remarks that his boss is extra nice to him, asking the age of his mother and feeling relieved after hearing that she was around sixty years old. The work on his desk has piled up high, but Meursault does not feel like doing it. Instead, he and Emmanuel, a dispatcher in his company run away to Celeste's where they eat, smoke, and frolic. Meursault wants to boil some potatoes, so he heads home and bumps into his neighbor, Salamano, a decrepit lonely man whose only companion is a spaniel dog with a skin disease which has unfortunately been transmitted to its owner.

On his continual way home, Meursault runs into another neighbor, Raymond Sintes, a shorter, young man with a nose like a boxer. The two comment on the pathetic lifestyle of Salamano and begin to talk about their own lives. Raymond tells Meursault about the woman he lived with who he had recently discovered was cheating on him. With powerful sentiments of anger, hatred, and revenge, they unanimously discuss ways in which to punish her, through physical violence or even through public denouncement as a prostitute. "He [Raymond] asked if I thought she was cheating on him, and it seemed to me she was; if I thought she should be punished and what I would do in his place, and I said you can't ever be sure, but I understood his wanting to punish her" Part 1, Chapter 3, pg. 32. Meursault discovers that this horrible woman is Moorish - an Arab. Raymond remarks that he considers Meursault a friend and will cease using the title, monsieur, when he speaks with him. Time has flown by and the two feel a common bond as they talk all evening. Raymond does not ask Meursault about his mother, for he (like Meursault) understands that things like this happen and that it is best not to dwell on them. People die and life goes on. As Meursault leaves, he feels content with his new friend.

Topic Tracking: Detachment 4

"I got up. Raymond gave me a very firm handshake and said that men always understand each other. I left his room, closing the door behind me, and paused for a minute in the dark, on the landing. The house was quiet, and a breath of dark, dank air wafted up from deep in the stairwell. All I could hear was the blood pounding in my ears. I stood there, motionless." Part 1, Chapter 3, pg. 33



Part 1, Chapter 4

The following week, Meursault works hard at his company, visits Raymond often, and sees two movies with Emmanuel (who understands nothing onscreen). On Saturday, he goes to the beach with Marie, they play in the water and are intimate all day long. They race back to his apartment where Meursault tells her all about Salamano and Raymond. They jump in bed together again.

"She was wearing a pair of my pajamas with the sleeves rolled up. When she laughed I wanted her again. A minute later she asked me if I loved her. I told her it didn't mean anything but that I didn't think so. She looked sad. But as we were fixing lunch, and for no apparent reason, she laughed in such a way that I kissed her." Part 1, Chapter 4, pg. 35

At the moment of their kindling romance, they hear fighting and screaming breaking out in Raymond's room. Raymond has beaten up his girl over and over again, screaming about her cheating on him, meanwhile violently expressing his anger. Marie is shocked. She cannot understand why Meursault will not call a police officer. He claims that he does not like them and does not want to deal with their paperwork and attitudes. Another neighbor brings in the policeman who slaps Raymond across the face, forcing his cigarette to fly through the air. The woman, badly beaten, claims that Raymond is a pimp who beats on women. The policemen pays her little heed and eventually leaves. Raymond tells Meursault that whatever happens doesn't matter, his actions were justified, and even if he gets in trouble, the girl got a beating that she deserved.

Raymond asks Meursault to act as a witness that the girl cheated if needs be for police files. He complies.

Topic Tracking: Detachment 5

On their way out, Salamano begs for help in search of his dog. He worries that the pound took him away and he may not be allowed to keep it because of its grotesque skin disease and the scabs produced by it. Meursault does not care about Salamano's canine woes and goes to his own room. However, through the door, he can hear Salamano sobbing. This noise makes him think briefly of Maman. But, he soon returns to his own thoughts, bed, and hunger pains.



Part 1, Chapter 5

Raymond calls Meursault at work to invite him and Marie to a party at a friend's home. He warns Meursault that an Arab followed him home the other day, that he is probably the brother of his ex-mistress, and that many Arabs may be waiting for him outside the building. Meursault feels uncomfortable on the phone at work and worries that he will get in trouble for using professional time for personal use. His boss calls him into his office, but not want to speak with him about his use of the phone. He discusses Meursault's ambition (or lack thereof) and possible future with the company. He claims that Meursault is a complete disaster when it comes to business and has no ambition with his work. Meursault simply returns to his desk and continues to work after the discussion.

"I would rather not have upset him, but I couldn't see any reason to change my life. Looking back on it, I wasn't unhappy. When I was a student, I had lots of ambitions like that. But when I had to give up my studies I learned very quickly that none of it really mattered." Part 1, Chapter 5, pg. 41

Topic Tracking: Detachment 6

Marie visits and asks Meursault once again if he loves her. She wants to marry him and inquires as to his detached emotions. He continually tells her that feelings and marriage do not matter. If she wants to get married, he would marry her. He would marry any woman who is in her shoes and sees nothing special about Marie. He tells her about his business proposition to go to Paris and she gets excited about such an opportunity and change.

The two dine at Celeste's, where Meursault takes notice of a strange woman at a nearby table. He watches her add up her tip meticulously and then read through a long magazine page by page. She leaves in a hurry and drives away extremely fast. Soon after her departure, Meursault forgets about her.

Topic Tracking: Observation 3

Back at home on his bed, Salamano complains about his missing dog. He dispels his life's miseries onto Meursault, including his late marriage, military involvement, solidarity, and frustration with not being able to keep his ill canine at home with him. He claims that the only illness his dogs suffers from is old age, adding that there is no cure for that. Salamano also tells Meursault that everyone thinks poorly of him because he put his mother in a home instead of taking care of her. Meursault never comprehended such a problem, for he always knew she was old and could not care for herself. Furthermore, he knew Maman would be surrounded by peers in the home. In his eyes, it seemed the best thing to do for her.



Salamono realizes at this point that he is truly alone, reaches his hand out to Meursault, and goes to bed. Meursault hopes the dog doesn't bark too loud all night keeping him awake.



Part 1, Chapter 6

Meursault has difficulty waking up on Sunday and does so only with the help of Marie. On their way out, they stop to see Raymond, who meets them outside in the sun. Meursault is repulsed by Raymond's scruffy appearance. He had testified the previous day for Raymond, allowing him to 'get off' with simply a warning. As they walk away from the building, Meursault notices the group of Arabs staring at them menacingly. They walk away, faster, and still see the Arabs behind them. Raymond tries to joke with Marie about her relationship; yet, she is not amused by his banter.

The threesome catches the bus and arrives at the beach. Marie plays in the sand with her oilcloth as Raymond leads them to his friend's bungalow at the end of the shore. Raymond's friend's name is Masson. Masson spends all his free time on the beach with his sweet, plump little wife. Marie laughs with her briefly about female sentiments and the typical problems with men. Meursault looks at her kindly and thinks, "For the first time maybe, I really thought I was going to get married" Part 1, Chapter 6, pg. 50.

Masson, his wife, and Marie swim in the ocean, while Raymond and Meursault watch on from afar. Raymond compliments Marie, and upon her return to Meursault flirts intensely. Meursault is thrilled with the powerful effects of the sun on his tanning body. Everyone goes back inside except for Marie and Meursault, who return to the water to roll in the waves and press their bodies against one another. Masson calls them inside for lunch, where they drink, smoke, and chat. After lunch, Madame Masson and Marie stay behind to nap, while the three men go for a walk on the beach.

On the beach, the three men spot the Arabs coming toward them. Raymond tells Masson to fight the second one, while he takes care of the one he knows - the brother of his ex-mistress. They fight. Raymond's mouth is smashed and his hand is cut open to a bloody pulp. As soon as they feel threatened, the Arabs run off into the sun. Masson takes him to a nearby doctor who allays his fears that he only suffered superficial flesh wounds - he has nothing serious to worry about. When they return, the women weep with horror upon first sight of the injuries. Meursault smokes a cigarette to ignore their whining, while Raymond walks off to the beach. Masson tells Meursault to let him go alone in his bad mood; Meursault, however, does not heed the warning and follows him. They come to the end of the beach, to a little stream and find the Arabs sitting and relaxing. Raymond pulls a gun out of his pocket. Meursault warns him not to shoot anyone unless one of the Arabs pulls out a knife first. He asks for Raymond's gun as protection. He hands it over. "We [Raymond and Meursault] stared at each other without blinking, and everything came to a stop there between the sea, the sand, and the sun, and the double silence of the flute and the water. It was then that I realized that you could either shoot or not shoot" Part 1, Chapter 6, pg. 56.

Topic Tracking: Death 4

When the Arabs run off, Raymond returns to the cottage alone. The burning sun coupled with slurring effects of the alcohol forces Meursault into a state of unrest. He



cannot see a thing and feels a strong throbbing within him as he struggles to walk through the water and the sand. The Arab (who they recognize as Raymond's ex-mistress' brother) returns to the stream with a knife. Meursault pulls out the gun, in what he feels as defense. The combined effects of the afternoon (the heat and alcohol) make him feel as if he's being attacked and beaten. He pulls the trigger and shoots.

"The scorching blade slashed at my eyelashes and stabbed at my stinging eyes. That's when everything began to reel. The sea carried up a thick, fiery breath. It seemed to me as if the sky split open from one end to the other to rain down fire. My whole being tensed and I squeezed my hand around the revolver. The trigger gave; I felt the smooth underside of the butt; and there, in that noise, sharp and deafening at the same time, is where I fell started. I shook off the sweat and sun. I knew that I had shattered the harmony of the day, the exceptional silence of a beach where I'd been happy. Then I fired four more times at the motionless body where the bullets lodged without leaving a trace. And it was like knocking four quick times on the door of unhappiness." Part 1, Chapter 6, pg. 59.

Topic Tracking: Observation 4

Topic Tracking: Death 5



Part 2, Chapter 1

Meursault is questioned by the police in, what he believes to be, a nonchalant, insignificant case. He scrutinizes the faces and expressions of the policemen who advise him to get an attorney. Meursault does not understand why he needs one, for he sees his case as straightforward and easy. After speaking with the officials, he leaves the room. "On my way out, I was even going to shake his [the policeman's] hand, but just in time, I remembered that I had killed a man" Part 2, Chapter 1, pg. 64.

Topic Tracking: Detachment 7

The following day, a short, chubby lawyer comes to see Meursault and begins to question him about his background and character. They discuss the day of Maman's funeral and why Meursault showed so little emotion at that time. Meursault explains that he does not know if he wished Maman dead or not, and was simply anxious and tired on the day of her death. He regrets nothing and feels nothing. The defense attorney is irate with Meursault's detached attitude and hopes he will not speak so indifferently in court. Meursault makes no promises about his testimony and future dialogue.

The magistrate pleads with Meursault, telling him that God can forgive anyone and loves everyone. He discusses Meursault's character and withdrawn persona. Meursault replies that he never has anything to say, so he says nothing to everyone. This seems to make sense to the magistrate. They discuss the case, the quarrel, and the beach and the shooting. The one thing that the magistrate cannot understand is why, after the first shot, Meursault shot four more bullets into a dead body on the ground. He thrusts a crucifix at Meursault, begging to hear him state a belief in God, and is even more shocked when Meursault claims he does not harbor such feelings. After more discussion, Meursault complies with the magistrate and claims to believe in a higher power simply to shut him up so that he may be left alone. He seems vindicated, but exhausted. Meursault seems annoyed, but not sorry for what he has done. The magistrate simply wants Meursault to admit guilt, emotion, and repentance - sentiments too foreign to Meursault's character.

Topic Tracking: Death 6

For the next eleven months, Meursault speaks often with the magistrate, yet now with the company of his lawyer and the court reporter. The case is slowly getting ready for trial and Meursault becomes more and more taciturn.

"And I can say that at the end of the eleven months that this investigation lasted, I was almost surprised that I had ever enjoyed anything other than those rare moments when the judge would lead me to the door of his office, slap me on the shoulder, and say to me cordially, 'That's all for today, Monsieur Antichrist.' I would then be handed back over to the police." Part 2, Chapter 1, pg. 71



Part 2, Chapter 2

Reality sets in as Meursault is placed in his prison cell. He realizes that the small room is now his home, since he cannot have visitors. He thinks of Marie not able to visit him, for she is technically not his wife.

He is first put into a cell with several other Arabs who taunt him until he tells them that he is in prison for killing an Arab. They become quickly silent. Eventually, he receives a visitor who he hopes is Marie. The visitor is Marie and she is standing amongst a group of visitors who consist of Moorish women and one heavy white woman. They take turns yelling at their respective loved ones behind bars, screaming messages of love and longing. Meursault wants to take Marie in his arms, go swimming, and feel her skin against his. When it is her turn to yell, she asks him if he needs anything. She then tells him that when he gets out of prison, they will get married. She smiles during the entire visit. Meursault is frustrated by the constant commotion and noise in the visiting area. Soon, each prisoner affectionately says goodbye to his respective mother, wife, or friend. Meursault realizes that he can and must get used to this type of life. "At that time, I often thought that if I had had to live in the trunk of a dead tree, with nothing to do but look up at the sky flowing overhead, little by little I would have gotten used to it" Part 2, Chapter 2, pg. 77.

Topic Tracking: Observation 5

Topic Tracking: Detachment 8

Meursault misses the touch of a woman. He doesn't much think of Marie in particular, but rather of women as a whole. He becomes friendly with the head guard in the prison confides in him about this typical frustration of prisoners - the lack of conjugal visits and feminine touch. The guard tells him that it is his punishment - lack of freedom. Meursault slowly realizes what the guard means by this when he cannot smoke a cigarette, and does not have his belt, shoelaces, tie, and everything else he brought with him to prison. As the weeks pass, Meursault gets used to this new lifestyle, without freedom. He lives his days by his memories, thinking of his room, his furniture, the beach.

"And the more I thought about it, the more I dug out my memory things I had overlooked or forgotten. I realized then that a man who had lived only one day could easily live for a hundred years in prison. He would have enough memories to keep him from being bored. In a way, it was an advantage." Part 2, Chapter 2, pg. 79

Topic Tracking: Observation 6

As the months pass, Meursault simply must pass the time in prison. For him, that is the hardest part. He sleeps approximately 16-18 hours a day, eats when meals are prepared, and keeps busy by reading and re-reading the same clip from an old newspaper about a man who was missing for years and years later returns home with a fortune. He is soon murdered and his family therein dies because of the tragedy. After



rereading the clip, Meursault thinks back to Maman's funeral and the nurse saying that there is no way out of prison. He acknowledges his presence in prison, yet again.

Topic Tracking: Death 7



Part 2, Chapter 3

As the summers pass, Meursault's case eventually comes up for judgment at the end of the period of the Court of Assizes. Still nonchalant, Meursault wonders how it will turn out. His lawyer assures him that the case will take no longer than two to three days. As the court is filled with people and lawyers, Meursault looks around. He observes the jury staring at him. He thinks that the legal process is silly, and furthermore that his presence in court is all part of a game. Meursault reminds himself that he did, in fact, commit a crime, and that these people are present to hear his case and decide his fate.

Meursault is surprised at the large crowd that is present in court. A reporter tells him that because the summer season is slow, the media has overtaken his case. Many people are anxious to see how it turns out. The reporter longs for him to be acquitted. The lawyers enter the courtroom, shake hands, and then the three judges walk in, dressed in red and black. The proceedings begin as the judges ask the lawyers to call their witnesses. Meursault feels everyone looking at him, and occasionally forgets why he is there. He remembers and looks at the list of witnesses. He recognizes the names on the list: Raymond, Celeste, Marie, Salamano.

Topic Tracking: Observation 7

Topic Tracking: Detachment 9

The judge begins immediately with having the prosecutor question Meursault. He begins by asking him his name, date of birth, etc. This line of questioning irritates Meursault, for he thinks it would be silly of the French legal system to try the wrong man. He is irritated by pretty much everything in the courtroom proceedings. The lawyer dwells on Maman's funeral and livelihood. Meursault responds that he put her in a home because he could not look after her. They had separate lives and were both ok with it. The judges want the prosecutor to move on from this line of questioning. The lawyer then asks him if, when he went to the spring at the beach, he had returned to the exact same place with the intention of killing the Arab. After Meursault responds vehemently in the negative, the judge announces that the hearing is adjourned till later that afternoon.

When he returns to court, Meursault sees the exact same faces - same environment. This time, however, he feels the heat stronger than before. He looks around at the rest of the people provided with straw fans and feels jealous. The director of the home, the caretaker is called next to question and repeatedly discusses Meursault's "calmness" about his mother's death and funeral. Meursault realizes, after the prosecutor accomplishes his goal in the examination, that he is in trouble. "...for the first time in years, I had this stupid urge to cry, because I could feel how much all these people hated me" Part 2, Chapter 3, pg. 90.

Topic Tracking: Observation 8

The caretaker is then called up to the podium for questioning. He is asked the same questions that the director was asked: about Maman, Meursault's indifference, and the



offering of a cigarette and coffee by Meursault upon learning of his mother's death. The case seems to be working against Meursault, as each witness illustrates his cold nature and uncaring attitude about death and Maman. Monsieur Perez is brought to the stand and asked about Meursault's attitude at the funeral. He claims that he was so distraught and sad that day, that he cannot remember Meursault's actions or attitude. He also mentions that he never knew Meursault very well - only Maman. The prosecutor asks him if he saw him cry that day. Perez responds that he did not. However, when the defense attorney cross-examines him, he asks if he saw Meursault not cry. Perez also responds negatively, giving the jury a moment to laugh.

"The spectators laughed. And my lawyer, rolling up one of his sleeves, said with finality, 'Here we have a perfect reflection of this entire trial: everything is true and nothing is true!'" Part 2, Chapter 3, pg. 91

The next witness called by the defense is Celeste. Again, Meursault realizes at this point that he is the defense and consequently listens to the testimony. Celeste comments that Meursault is a customer of his and also a friend. He also states that there are no problems with his bills and that he is just going through a time with lots of bad luck. Celeste calls the entire crime 'bad luck,' vouching for Meursault with every word. When he steps down, Meursault feels that for the first time in his life, he wants to kiss another man in gratification.

When Marie is called up to the stand next, the tone of the court changes. The prosecutor inquires as to her relationship with Meursault. She first calls herself a friend and soon after admits to a future marriage possibility. The prosecutor calls her relationship with Meursault a liaison and wonders how long they have known one another and when they first began dating. She tells him the specific date and everything that they did, including swimming at the beach, the movies (a comedy), and the lovemaking. The enraged prosecutor presents the situation, once again to the jury, illustrating Meursault's mentality. He claims that the day after his mother dies, Meursault starts, what he calls, a dubious liaison and goes to see a movie for pure laughs. When Marie steps down, she realizes the damage that has been done to Meursault's case.

Topic Tracking: Detachment 10

After Marie's testimony, nobody listens to the rest of the witnesses with consideration. Masson says that Meursault is a good man, while Salamano explains how kind he was with his ill dog. They try to convince the jury of Meursault's strong character; but by this point nobody listens or cares. They seem to already be convinced of his guilt.

Raymond is the next and final witness to take the stand for the defense. He explains that the two are friends, that the man murdered was truly angry with him for hitting his sister, and that Meursault is innocent. The prosecutor does not see everything Raymond states as pure coincidence. Instead, he sees Raymond's testimony as illustrating Meursault's actions as pure premeditated murder. Furthermore, he claims that Meursault was Raymond's accomplice throughout the entire debacle. "They [the jury]



had before them the basest of crimes, a crime made worse than sordid by the fact that they were dealing with a monster, a man without morals" Part 2, Chapter 3, pp. 95-96.

The two lawyers explode, with the prosecutor claiming Meursault's obvious guilt and the defender overtly illustrating his innocence. After Raymond is told to step down, the court is adjourned. Meursault sees and feels the sun, the summer breeze, and knows he must return to his prison cell. He is exhausted and thinks back to a time when he was truly happy.

"Yes, it was the hour when, a long time ago, I was perfectly content. What awaited me back then was always a night of easy, dreamless sleep. And yet something has changed, since it was back to my cell that I went to wait for the next day...as if familiar paths traced in summer skies could lead as easily to prison as to the sleep of the innocent." Part 2, Chapter 3, pg. 97

Topic Tracking: Observation 9



Part 2, Chapter 4

Meursault sits in the prisoner's dock, listening to the summations from the prosecution and defense. He sees the isolation and distance of the person on trial from the rest of the people in the courtroom. He realizes that he is that prisoner, separated from the jury, the audience, the lawyers, the judges, and contemplates his role. "In a way, they seemed to be arguing the case as if it had nothing to do with me. Everything was happening without my participation. My fate was being decided without anyone so much as asking my opinion" Part 2, Chapter 4, pg. 98. He listens to the prosecution rant and reiterate every detail of his personality, coldness, indifference to Maman, dates with Marie, and work as the accomplice to Raymond. Meursault still feel separated from himself, the person on trial, but in his mind, also agrees with everything the prosecutor says. He is exhausted and bored, all-the-while drifting off to sleep during the summations. The prosecutor continues to claim that Meursault is a cold-hearted man, problematic to society. After his long, passionate speech about the horrible crimes of this man on trial, the judge asks Meursault if he would like to say anything. He thinks about saying that he did not mean to kill the Arab. Instead, he mutters something about the intense heat of the afternoon. The judge adjourns court till later that afternoon.

Topic Tracking: Detachment 11

When everyone returns to court, the lawyers begin their summations. Meursault cannot believe how long and boring the closing statement is for the defense. He does not understand why the lawyer uses the first person, "I" when referring to Meursault. The case continues to make him feel detached and confused. The prosecutor's summation, however, is strong and powerful. Meursault thinks the prosecutor is a better lawyer than his own. When the two men finish, Meursault is relieved, yet powerless. "But all the long speeches, all the interminable days and hours that people had spent talking about my soul, had left me with the impression of a colorless swirling river that was making me dizzy" Part 2, Chapter 4, pg. 104.

Meursault looks around at the courtroom scene and thinks back on his life. It doesn't seem like his own anymore. He can barely feel anything for Marie or his supposed friends. Court is adjourned and people come up to Meursault, congratulating him on the case. Meursault and his lawyer wait for the verdict.

The juror finds Meursault guilty of premeditated murder. His lawyer does not think there is a chance to overturn the verdict, but they can appeal it to a higher court if he desires. Meursault looks again at the people in the courtroom. They look exactly as they did at the opening of the trial. The foreman returns to the courtroom and the judge announces the sentence.

"The presiding judge told me in a bizarre language that I was to have my head cut off in a public square in the name of the French people. Then it seemed to me that I suddenly knew what was on everybody's fact. It was a look of consideration, I'm sure. The policemen were very gentle with me. The lawyer put his hand on my wrist. I wasn't

thinking about anything anymore. But the presiding judge asked me if I had anything to say. I thought about it. I said, 'No.'" Part 2, Chapter 4, pg. 107

Topic Tracking: Death 8



Part 2, Chapter 5

Meursault refuses to speak with the prison chaplain three times. He sits in his cell, thinking, looking at the ceiling, and wondering why he never paid attention earlier in his life to records of public executions. He thinks of how much must be written on those accounts and how they - the prisoners - seem to owe so much to society. He thinks of escaping in his mind, leaping bounds from the ordinary life. Then he returns to his normal thoughts about his current life in prison. He thinks of the verdict as difficult to believe. How could such words be spoken on behalf of such an arbitrary group of people as the French? He begins to realize how consequences of actions are, in fact, as real as his flesh and blood.

Meursault recollects a story Maman told him about his father. It is the only story about his father that he knows. When he was little, his father went to see a public execution and threw up afterwards. He said that executions are the most important thing to see and that it is more important that the human emotions still exist, and that all men should attend murders and throw up afterwards. "How had I not seen that there was nothing more important than an execution, and that when you come right down to it, it was the only thing a man could truly be interested in?" Part 2, Chapter 5, pg. 110 He puts such ideas out of his mind, for fear of getting carried away and frightened.

Topic Tracking: Observation 10

Meursault tries to think logically and reasonably. He pictures his own execution and the modern guillotine. He had always pictured his execution as the traditional slicing from the French Revolution. However, the guillotine of his time is much more precise, much less personable, and looks like a perfectly gleaming, beautiful instrument. He thinks that someone could walk up to it as if it were another person, instead of a tall, foreboding podium of historic days.

Meursault thinks perpetually about two things: the dawn and his appeal. He listens to his heartbeat and contemplates a life in which he did not feel or hear it inside his head. He remarks that dawn is the best time for him, for he only expects and likes things to happen when the red sky creeps into his cell. He also thinks of living life another twenty years. At the same time, he knows that everyone must die at some point and wonders if he would make much of a difference anyway if he were to live longer. When he accepts his life as being over, his personality changes in his mind. He sporadically thinks of the possibility of a pardon. When he imagines such a gift, it takes all his strength to calm himself down and rationalize the situation. When such a feeling occurs, Meursault feels calm for a brief moment.

Topic Tracking: Observation 11

During one of these moments of calamity, Meursault thinks of Marie and her soft touch. It has been a long time since last she wrote. He wonders if she no longer desires to be the girlfriend of a condemned man, if she is with someone else, or if she is even alive.



He realizes that he does not care for her and especially does not care for her, if she were dead. He can understand such a sentiment, for he would not expect anyone to care about him once he was dead.

Topic Tracking: Death 9

Suddenly the chaplain enters Meursault's cell, much to his surprise. It is not his usual calling. He sits Meursault down and inquires as to why he has not seen him. Meursault tells him that he does not believe in God. The two embark upon a long conversation, in which they both agree that everyone is condemned to death. The only difference is that Meursault's is imminent. The chaplain refers to Meursault as his friend instead of as a subject. The chaplain stands up in the middle of the conversation, gazes at Meursault with penetrating eyes, and speaks.

"The chaplain knew the game well too, I could tell right away: his gaze never faltered. And his voice didn't falter, either, when he said, 'Have you no hope at all? And do you really live with the thought that when you die, you die, and nothing remains?' 'Yes,' I said." Part 2, Chapter 5, pg. 117

The chaplain lowers his head, sits down, and tells Meursault that he pities him. Meursault can think of nothing else except annoyance and walks away, turning his back to the chaplain.

The chaplain urges him to continue on a quest for redemption. He claims that human justice is nothing, while divine justice is everything. He believes Meursault has a chance for an appeal. Meursault simply accepts his fate as is, without understanding what sin is. He knows he is guilty and that everyone believes him to be guilty. The chaplain continues to approach him longer and farther, more and more, begging him to see more of the situation. Meursault sees nothing else. And, as soon as he believes the chaplain has given up on him, he turns around and cries out wondering if Meursault ever wished for another life - one that is not so earthly, one more divine! Meursault responds that, of course, he wishes for another life. But that life is nothing more than one of greater materialism, with money, time, and a better smile. Meursault is frustrated with the chaplain and wonders why he fights him continually. He does not believe that the chaplain is on his side. The chaplain responds that, of course he is there to help Meursault. "I am on your side. But you have no way of knowing it, because your heart is blind" Part 2, Chapter 5, pg. 120.

At that moment, Meursault becomes irate and furious. He grabs the chaplain and yells at him at the top of his lungs, about all his feelings, everything that has happened in his life, his futile relationships, all relationships being futile by nature, and ultimately the significance (or lack thereof) of God. Guards are forced to restrain him and help the chaplain. They fear for his safety, for Meursault, after all, is a cold-blooded killer in their eyes. After Meursault's eruption, most of his anger, his hatred, his indifference, and confusion melt away. He feels strangely exhausted and at peace. He understands now, at the point near her death, why Maman took a fiancé. He sees the end of his life and accepts it.



Topic Tracking: Death 10

The execution approaches as he looks back on his life and his relationship with his mother. He is ready to live his life all again because he just let go of his past hurt and frustration. He sees the end of his life and wants to re-live it.

"As if that blind rage has washed me clean, rid me of hope; for the first time, I that night alive with signs and stars, I opened myself to the gentle indifference of the world. Finding it so much life myself - so like a brother, really - I felt that I had been happy and that I was happy again. For everything to be consummated, for me to feel less alone, I had only to wish that there be a large crowd of spectators the day of my execution and that they greet me with cries of hate." Part 2, Chapter 5, pg. 122-3