**The Stranger by Albert Camus**



**Biography of Albert Camus**

Albert Camus (1913 – 1960) was a **French** philosopher, author and the recipient of the 1957 **Nobel Prize in Literature.** He was born in Algeria during the French colonization. His father died during World War I when Camus was a child. Despite the challenges, Camus excelled academically and received a scholarship to attend the *University of Algiers.* He was in Paris when the Germans fall on France during World War II in 1940. Camus tried to flee but finally joined the **French** **Resistance** where he served as editor-in-chief in underworld newspaper *Combat*. His most important works are *The Stranger, The Plague, The Myth of Sisyphus, and The Rebel.*

**Background of *The Stranger***

The novel “The Stranger”(1942) is set in **French Algeria,** a French colony until gaining independence in 1962. During the period in which the novel is written, there was a growing sense of Arab-Berber nationalism in Algeria. The tension between the French colonial rulers and the indigenous population caused a complex sociopolitical environment, which is highlighted in the novel.

On the other hand **World War II** had begun and the Nazi regime occupied France, though Camus was involved in French Resistance but he was feared from the horrors of War. His own philosophy of Absurdism, emerged, whose ideas are reflected throughout The Stranger.

**Themes**

***Meaninglessness and Absurdity:***

Camus argues that life is inherently meaningless and absurd. The novel’s protagonist Meursault also consider the world is meaningless. Meursault’s boss offers Meursault a position in Paris, but he rejects the boss’ offer without considering it. He recalls, **“I had lots of ambitions…But when I had to give up my studies I learned very quickly that none of it really mattered.”**Meursault didn’t even embrace religion, he believes only in his physical experience.

***Physical Sensations:***

Throughout the novel, Meursault experiences physical sensations. As a narrator, he constantly supplies physical details without analyzing emotional or psychological import. As Meursault explains to his lawyer, **“…my nature was such that my physical needs often got in the way of my feelings.”**

***Indifference and Detachment:***

The novel opens with Meursault’s indifference at his mother’s funeral and detachment from the world as he rejects social norms. He was aware of about his surrounding but his attitude was indifferent to the world.

***Justice and Morality:***

The novel raises questions about justice and morality, it is a critique of social norms.

***Difficulty in Relationships:***

Throughout the novel, Meursault remains unable to experience deep relationships to the people in his life. His relationships were passionless, incidental and superficial.

**Summary**

“The Stranger” by Albert Camus is a novel that follows the life of a shipping clerk, Meursault, a dispassionate and detached Algerian. The story begins when Meursault gets a telegram about his mother’s death but displaying a lack of emotional response. The novel takes a dramatic turn when Meursault becomes involved with a woman named Marie. They swim, flirt, go to a comedy, and go home together. Marie is shocked to hear Meursault’s mother just died. Meursault’s neighbor Raymond invites him to dinner and recounts his thirst for revenge on his mistress. He gets Meursault to write a letter inviting her back. It leads to a confrontation with Raymond’s mistress’ brother. This confrontation results in Meursault committing a crime.

The second part of the novel centers on Meursault’s trial for the murder, where his lack of emotional expression become focal points. Despite the lack of a clear motive, Meursault is sentenced to death, due to his perceived moral and emotional deficiencies.

**Symbols**

* ***Meursault’s mother’s funeral:***It symbolizes his emotional detachment and inability to conform to societal expectations.
* ***The Beach:*** It symbolizes a space where Meursault retreats for solitude.
* ***The Sun:*** The relentless sun in the novel symbolizes the harsh nature of the universe.
* ***The Courtroom:***The courtroom symbolizes the societal judgment that Meursault faces.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion *The Stranger* by Albert Camus is a timeless exploration of existentialist philosophey and the human condition. Through the detached and indifferent Meursault explores the themes of absurdity and indifference and and search for meaning in a meaningless world. Set against the backdrop of colonial Algeria, the novel shows the complexities of societal expectations, justice, and individual freedom.