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The Stranger
Albert Camus



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To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

The Stranger

Pre-Reading

1. *The Stranger*, written by Albert Camus, an Algerian, was first published in 1942, when Algeria was still a colony of France; World War II was still being fought with great intensity, with France being one of the central battlegrounds. During the war, Camus spent time in Paris, which was under occupation by Nazi Germany. He wrote articles for *Combat*, one of the strongest French Resistance newspapers. While in France and writing news stories, Camus saw much horror and bloodshed, destruction of homes, animals, and people.

Having this background about the time period in which *The Stranger* was written, list three themes you think the novel might contain, and then for each potential theme write a brief explanation as to why you think this concept will be in the book. Remember, it does not matter if you are correct or not; these are only your assumptions about some of the themes you think you'll see in the story.

2. Albert Camus was born in Algeria in North Africa in 1913, and his parents were French Nationals. His father died in World War I when Camus was just a baby, and he grew up poor. His mother's family was Spanish, and she was half deaf. Camus had to work his way through school, during which time he contracted tuberculosis. As the French-speaking, Algerian-born son of non-Arabs, Camus was called a *pied-noir*, which translates as blackfoot.

The Stranger is set in Algiers around the late 1930s or early 1940s. Camus would have been in his late twenties, and the *Pieds-Noirs* were a highly visible and even dominant part of life in Algiers, the Algerian capital of this French colony.

Do the author's story and the book's title cause you to want to read the book? Why or why not? Answer this question in a few sentences.

The Stranger

5. *The Stranger* was originally written in French. Two well-known English translations are by Stuart Gilbert and Matthew Ward. While both of these translations are in the same language, the two men choose to handle certain words in different ways; for instance, Gilbert uses the word, “mother,” whereas Ward uses the word “Maman.” This example is why some critics believe that a translation can convey the story of a book as it appears in its original language, but translation makes it more difficult to capture the full essence it.

Go online and find some French to English translation sites. Here are a few:

- www.translation.langenberg.com
- www.babelfish.yahoo.com
- www.worldlingo.com/en/products_services/worldlingo_translator.html
- www.freetranslation.com

Type in the following French phrases and write down how the different sites translate them into English:

- Pour être ou ne pas être, là est la question.
- La vie, la liberté et la poursuite du bonheur.
- Il a été le meilleur des cas, elle a été la pire des époques.
- Nous n'avons rien à craindre, mais la crainte elle-même.
- Ils ont tous vécu heureux pour toujours.
- Au commencement, Dieu créa le ciel et la terre.
- Mary avait un petit agneau, sa toison était blanche comme neige.

The resulting phrases should be quotations that you immediately recognize. Can you draw any conclusions about the sites, about translations in general, or about languages from this experiment?

The Stranger

Write a response about how Meursault perceives his boss's emotions. Create two columns. In one column, write the emotions Meursault thinks his boss is feeling about the situation. In the second column, write the emotions Meursault is feeling about missing work to go to the funeral. Then write a journal entry, as the boss, in which you explain your feelings about letting a worker off for a couple of days to attend his mother's funeral.

13. Meursault is not sure what to do now that he does not have to go to work for a few days. After thinking about it, he decides to go to the beach. When he gets there, he notices a woman who used to be a typist in his office. Her name is Marie Cardona. He approaches her, and the two end up spending the entire day together, swimming, lying together on a float, laughing, and talking.

This afternoon might be considered a first date. Does the encounter sound like a good way for you to get to know a person you might be romantically interested in? Why or why not? Make a list of activities that would be good to do on a first date.

14. The day after Meursault's encounter with Marie drags for him. He considers going to Céleste's, a nearby restaurant, for his usual lunch, but he decides against it because he believes the people there will ask him questions about his Maman, and he wants to avoid that. Eventually, Meursault settles on his balcony, eating food, smoking a cigarette, and watching the people on the street below.

Look at the two paragraphs in Part 1, Chapter 2 that contain the scene in which Meursault watches the street scene from his apartment. He describes an assortment of people, families, adolescents, and workers. Select one person from the various people he describes. Imagine you are that person, emailing a friend about the day. Write what you would say to a friend about what you saw as you walked through Meursault's neighborhood. Include a brief description of seeing Meursault on his balcony and your character's perceptions about him.

The Stranger

Chapter 4

21. While Marie and Meursault are preparing their lunch, they suddenly hear shrieking. They go to the hallway, and others in the building have gathered in front of Raymond's apartment. He is apparently beating his mistress. A policeman shows up and confronts Raymond. The mistress tells the officer that Raymond has beaten her. The cop gets physical with Raymond, who is smoking and rather standoffish about the whole ordeal. Eventually, the mistress is let go by the officer.

Imagine that after the altercation with Raymond, the mistress has immediately gone to her sister's apartment. Write a conversation between the mistress and her sister.

22. Later the same afternoon that Raymond beat his mistress, he appears at Meursault's apartment. He informs Meursault that he was made to go to the police station. Raymond tells Meursault that he has come by because he wants Meursault to go the station and be a character witness on Raymond's behalf. Meursault states, "It didn't matter to me, but I didn't know what I was supposed to say. According to Raymond, all I had to do was to state that the girl had cheated on him. I agreed to act as a witness for him."

Imagine you are a police officer at the station Raymond and Meursault report to. It is your job to make sure the stories corroborate each other. As the officer with this responsibility, you take notes about what Raymond says and then you take notes about what Meursault says. Write these notations, imagining you are this officer in charge. Afterward, write a summary about whether you believe Raymond is innocent, or if he should be prosecuted.

23. At the end of Chapter 4, the reader learns that Salamano's dog has disappeared. The departure of the dog shakes up Meursault's older neighbor's life. He simply does not know what to do without his longtime companion. In his isolation, Salamano even sadly wonders to Meursault about what will happen to him now that he is all alone.