

Advanced Placement in
English Literature and Composition

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

The Stranger

by Albert Camus

written by Michael Stacey

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ISBN 978-1-935466-15-4
Reorder No. 307578

The Stranger

Objectives

By the end of the Unit, students will be able to:

- Better understand the effect of a first-person narrator on the overall meaning and impact of a novel.
- Explore the relationship between philosophy and literature.
- Examine how ambiguity can affect the meaning of a text.
- Analyze the creation and development of motifs and imagery and the role they play in the novel.
- Explain the how narrative structure can affect the understanding of a text.
- Explore the role of dialogue in prose fiction.
- Understand the role of external and internal conflict, namely person vs. person, and person vs. self.
- Place the novel in its general historical context.

Background Notes

Where does *The Stranger* fit into literary history?

The first half of the twentieth century gave birth to a large range of important and diverse literary pieces. Literary Modernism raged in the Anglo-speaking areas of the world, which included many major Western European cities. Although Literary Modernism typically is boxed in with an arbitrary ending date of around the time of World War II, Modernism cannot be explored in a vacuum. Therefore, there are some ways that this novel has some Modernist qualities, but also as will be explained below, its classification as a philosophical text makes the novel timeless as it grapples with basic human concerns of identity, fate, community, justice, etc.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

World War, and the Disfiguration of Western Consciousness

The Stranger was published many years after World War I, but the World War's effects were still being felt at the time of this novel's publication. Even though the novel's publication coincided with World War II, the problems that the novel explores are more likely to be products of the ideologies formed after World War I. World War I disfigured Western consciousness due to the scale of the war and the impact it had on the entire world (not just militaries and geopolitics). At the time of World War I, the general public was not as desensitized to the atrocities of war as it is today. The new ways of waging war moved like a shockwave, not only affecting the soldiers. World War I saw the beginning of a more mechanized warfare, and a more dehumanizing warfare, in which combatants did not necessarily see the "whites of their opponents' eyes." In addition, the roots of modern chemical warfare were planted during World War I. All of these atrocities challenged the preconceived notion that going to war was a glorious thing, and much literature has been written that addresses that point. The United States was affected by World War I in a unique way namely due to the unhealed fissures of the American Civil War, which were still fresh in the consciousness of America (both militarily and in the general public). While *The Stranger* does not deal with the United States, it is important to realize that World War I was something that did not affect only Europe, which is generally the focus of common historical narratives about the war. Ultimately, the entire Western world was changed from the trauma; new philosophies emerged, including a refreshed rendition of nihilism by Friedrich Nietzsche. World War I is typically tied to Literary Modernism, which is commonly an America-centric literary category, but as we see—the war's grasp was wide.

French and Arab Conflict in Algeria

The French settlement of Algeria is an important piece of historical context that is necessary to understand some nuances in the novel. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries during Europe's "Scramble for Africa," the French colonized a predominately Arab Algeria, resulting in an ideological, economic, and cultural clash. The rampant colonization of many parts of the non-European world by imperial European governments engendered struggles between the indigenous inhabitants and the colonial settlers. The reader of *The Stranger* needs to be aware of the French and Algerian Arab conflict because it helps to see how Meursault's crime becomes more than just a murder but perhaps an ethnic statement. For Camus, the French-Algerian Meursault's murder of a (probably) darker-skinned Algerian of a different cultural background might take on further significance by symbolizing the colonization of Algeria by the French—and thus the destruction of a previously dominant Pre-French Algerian culture.

PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXT

Philosophy and Literature, a General Discussion

The relationship between philosophy and literature needs to be addressed in order to analyze *The Stranger*. While there are some pieces of fiction that are philosophical, not all literature is philosophical. And of course the opposite is true. There are pieces of philosophy that resemble prose fiction, but of course there is no reason for all philosophical writing to do so. Philosophy and literature share an interesting relationship because literature is a wonderful medium in exploring philosophical choices. For example, Camus is actively exploring many philosophical problems in his novel, which we must not forget is manifest fiction. The purely philosophical quality of the novel allows it to be timeless insofar as the novel's interpretation does not rely on knowing too many historical and cultural particulars. What is most important to remember is that fiction can be a great vehicle for exploring philosophy because philosophically tinged fiction can be more accessible than musty philosophical tomes that do not appeal to a wide variety of readers. The following are some specific issues raised in *The Stranger*:

Existentialism

Existentialism has multiple definitions and can be at times a very nebulous concept. There are, however, some common elements to be found in varieties of existentialism. Such elements include the individual, the individual's right and obligation to make choices rather than relying on "fate," "destiny," "Providence," or any other external force, and the problems inherent in existing in an irrational world. Camus wrote at length on the idea of an individual faced with an irrational world (the absurd) in his book *The Myth of Sisyphus*, which was published in the same year as *The Stranger*. Camus's theory of the absurd deals with the result of the individual's trying to live his life in such a way that *anything* he does will have an effect on his existence. In the theory of the absurd, Camus suggests that the world is irrational so that any type of rational action is meaningless, and hence the absurd is born. Camus's theory of the absurd also makes his philosophical classification difficult, as one would be hard pressed to call Camus a pure existentialist.

Fatalism

Fatalism suggests that human action does not matter because the world is ruled by destiny or fate. This figures into the plot and theme of *The Stranger*, as Meursault seems to be trapped in a series of inevitable events. Fatalism is commonly associated with existentialism insofar as both concepts address free will. While fatalism does not share a directly oppositional relationship with existentialism, they are commonly held as opposites because fatalism denies free will, while existentialism denies any external force like destiny.

Nihilism

Nihilism is another philosophical concept that is suggested in the novel. Nihilism is essentially a theory in which a person believes in nothing—life is meaningless (has no purpose) and all concepts and actions are empty. Meursault seems to be a proponent of nihilist thought.

Skepticism

The body of thought known as Skepticism exists within the larger corpus of Epistemology—the study of how we know things. Typically, Skepticism deals with whether or not we can know or believe that we know that we have any knowledge about a thing. This novel almost forces us to adopt a skeptic's view, especially as we question and potentially deny the information that we are given. Through the exploration of Skepticism, Camus pulls the reader in and implicates them in the text. Also, the reader can sense that Meursault is skeptical of his own observations and life experiences—all and all layering the various ways Skepticism works in the novel.

MAJOR LITERARY QUALITIES OF *THE STRANGER*

Ambiguity

Ambiguity is a multifaceted term that suggests that the meaning of a text may be otherwise. Most ambiguity in day-to-day life is linguistic ambiguity, in which wording poses an interpretive problem to the reader. Yet, ambiguity is more than just uncertainty in the meaning of words. Ambiguity can also apply to plot details and actions. For example, Meursault's uncertainty of when his mother died is a moment of ambiguity. Camus's styling of plot details can also be described as ambiguous because it offers the reader a host of interpretations, but with a feeling of unease as to making a solid interpretation.

Narration and Point-of-View

The Stranger is narrated from the first-person point of view; Meursault is both narrator and protagonist. He is most likely an unreliable narrator. The reader can sense Meursault's uncertain perception of life events. There are also times when Camus, the author, and Meursault, the narrator, disagree. The omniscient view of the author must be held more reliable than the limited perspective of the first-person narrative. The first person point of view in *The Stranger* is instrumental in conveying Meursault's psychological status. The reader can imagine this novel's being told from a third person point of view, and how it would lack such vivid psychological feeling.

Plot

Plot is an artifice contrived by an author to deliver a fabricated series of events to the reader. It is the backbone of a fiction text, the vehicle by which all other elements, especially theme and meaning, are conveyed. Without plot, the elements of fiction would involve characters sitting or standing in their setting, doing nothing and having nothing happen. Plot can be linear, in which all the events follow each other in some kind of normal time sequence, or nonlinear, in which events follow a scattered (yet still artificially contrived) pattern. There is also a recursive plot structure, which repeats common plot features. The plot of *The Stranger* is somewhat linear, but it becomes non-sequential and recursive with a number of time jumps and recounts of information.

Conflict

Conflict is most easily understood as a tensioned relationship between two forces or presences in the story: one character versus another character, one character versus a group, one character versus a social or natural force, etc. Conflict is the essential element to all plot structure; without conflict, the plot is a mere series of events, whether linear or nonlinear. Conflict is what allows action to build to a climax, and the resolution of the plot is, of course, the resolution of the conflict.

In *The Stranger* the reader can identify various conflict groupings, which show tension and propel the plot. For example, Meursault is in conflict with himself and his perceptions and worldview. Meursault is also in conflict with what could be described as the greater society, which takes the form of the legal system. Conflict can be very simple in nature, or it can be deep and complex where one character experiences various conflicts from various fronts simultaneously.

Paradox

A paradox is a relationship between at least two ideas seems contradictory at first glance; upon further analysis, however, there is found some kind of truth that reconciles the apparent contradictory relationship. One paradox that appears in *The Stranger* is Meursault's view of the relationship between the executioner and the condemned.

Practice Free Response Questions

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE ITEM 1

Read Part One, Chapter One from the beginning until the nurse enters the room in which the narrator and the caretaker are conversing, and then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how Camus uses declarative (and typically short) sentences, and explain why such use is significant. Be sure to cite examples from the passage in your essay.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE ITEM 2

Read Part One, Chapter Three, from when Meursault meets his neighbor Raymond until the conclusion of the chapter. In a well-organized essay, examine the dialogue between Meursault and Raymond, and explain how the dialogue reveals Meursault's character.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE ITEM 3

Read Part One, Chapter Six from Albert Camus's *The Stranger* beginning with "it occurred to me" to the end, and then write a well-organized essay in which you explain how Camus uses ambiguity to cloud the motives behind the narrator's actions. Be sure to cite examples from the passage in your essay.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE ITEM 4

Read Part Two, Chapter Three, from when the courtroom bell rings to when the judge asks the prosecutor whether he has any further questions. In this passage, Meursault realizes that, instead of being the watcher, he is being watched, which constitutes a reversal of a theme that was introduced in Part One of the novel. In a well-structured essay, explain why this reversal is significant to understanding the novel at this point in the narrative.

PRACTICE FREE-RESPONSE ITEM 5

Read Part Two, Chapter Four in its entirety and then compose a well-organized essay in which you describe how the relationship between the society within the context of the novel and Meursault indicates an occurrence of external conflict. Pay close attention to how the details of Meursault's case are treated by the other characters in the chapter (namely, the characters that participate in the legal profession).

PRACTICE FREE-RESPONSE ITEM 6

In narrative fiction, the narrator's point of view affects how meaning is conveyed to the reader. In a well-structured essay analyze how the point of view of the narrator in *The Stranger* is a crucial component to the overall meaning of the novel.

PRACTICE FREE-RESPONSE ITEM 7

In some pieces of narrative fiction, the author intentionally withholds important information so that the reader will not be able to fully understand or accurately assess the characters or their situations. In an organized essay, analyze how such instances in Camus's novel *The Stranger* force the reader to take a more active role in analyzing the plot of the novel.

PRACTICE FREE-RESPONSE ITEM 8

Novelists and playwrights often use their characters and plots as vehicles to test the application of a philosophical, political, or social idea. In a well-structured essay, explain how Camus explores philosophical problems (such as identity, free will, nihilism, etc.) in his novel *The Stranger*.

Practice Multiple-Choice Questions

PRACTICE MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS 1 – 5

Carefully read the passage from Part One, Chapter Two of Albert Camus's *The Stranger*, beginning with "I turned my chair" until the end of the chapter. Then, select the best answers to the following multiple-choice questions:

1. The apparent urgency with which the narrator returns to the window to eat his chocolate reveals that he
 - A. watches the street lamps turn on every night.
 - B. has a fondness for observing the sky change colors.
 - C. awaits the return of the local soccer team every Sunday.
 - D. enjoys eating in the open air of his balcony.
 - E. values his time to observe the town and the natural world he inhabits.
2. The narrator suggests that the first group of returning moviegoers saw what type of movie?
 - A. romance
 - B. adventure
 - C. comedy
 - D. drama
 - E. musical
3. The phrase "make cracks" refers to what action?
 - A. making dents in the sidewalk
 - B. making mean comments about passersby
 - C. making comments to get the attention of girls
 - D. making jokes to cause friends to laugh
 - E. making sounds to disturb townspeople
4. The turning on of the street lamps signifies
 - A. the passing of time from day to night
 - B. man's inventions affecting the natural world
 - C. an increased amount of time to observe the town and townspeople
 - D. that light has the ability to affect a person's actions
 - E. that there are rigid times accepted by society to perform certain actions
5. What word best describes the narrator of the passage?
 - A. visionary
 - B. vigilant
 - C. voyeur
 - D. versatile
 - E. verbose

PRACTICE MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS 6-10

Carefully read the passage from Part One, Chapter Four of Albert Camus's *The Stranger*, from the beginning of the chapter until Marie leaves Meursault's apartment. Then, select the best answers to the following multiple-choice questions.

6. The significance of the game Marie teaches Meursault to play while swimming in the sea is that it
 - A. uses figurative language to describe the brevity of human life.
 - B. presents the reader with a characterization of Marie and Meursault's relationship.
 - C. gives the reader a metaphor for the positive and negative experiences of life.
 - D. allows the reader to see how Marie has a childish personality.
 - E. shows the reader how it is possible to have fun with nature.
7. The narrator's inability to identify with Marie's concept of love means that the
 - A. narrator's definition of love is different from Marie's definition.
 - B. narrator is reluctant to conform to typical social concepts.
 - C. narrator does not want to be in a committed relationship with Marie.
 - D. narrator's relationship with Marie is purely physical.
 - E. narrator does not want to let his feelings be known to Marie.
8. Raymond's use of the word "sweetheart" can be best described as:
 - A. sarcastic.
 - B. envious.
 - C. endearing.
 - D. serious.
 - E. jovial.
9. Raymond's character can best be described as
 - A. comedic and childish.
 - B. stubborn and narrow-minded.
 - C. tough and emotional.
 - D. angry and manipulative.
 - E. asinine and concerned.
10. At the end of the passage, we learn that the narrator ate most of the lunch that he and Marie prepared. The best possible cause for Marie's lack of appetite is that she was
 - A. traumatized by Raymond's domestic dispute.
 - B. worried about not getting to work on time.
 - C. too exhausted from the beach the day before.
 - D. upset because the narrator does not love her.
 - E. concerned about Salamano and his dog.

PRACTICE MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS 1-15

Carefully read Part One, Chapter Five of Albert Camus's *The Stranger* in its entirety. Then select the best answers to the following questions.

11. When Raymond calls Meursault at work, Meursault is afraid of staying on the phone too long because he is
 - A. worried about losing his job.
 - B. frightened of being reprimanded by his boss.
 - C. concerned about his productivity.
 - D. behind on his work projects.
 - E. opposed to taking phone calls at work.
12. Meursault's reaction to his boss's plan to give him a new position in Paris can be best described as
 - A. ungrateful.
 - B. judicious.
 - C. ardent.
 - D. apathetic.
 - E. ambivalent.
13. What is the best way to describe Meursault's claim that there is really no way to know what Marie thinks of her love for him?
 - A. cautious
 - B. reasoned
 - C. feeble
 - D. avoiding
 - E. divisive
14. Meursault's reaction and suggestion to Salamano's situation can be interpreted as indicative of Meursault's view of people in human relationships. If that is true, what can be said about Meursault's view?
 - A. people disappear
 - B. people are replaceable
 - C. people change
 - D. people are interchangeable
 - E. people are animals
15. What term best describes how Salamano's loss of his dog mirrors Meursault's loss of his mother?
 - A. foil
 - B. antithesis
 - C. binary
 - D. ironic
 - E. coincidence

PRACTICE MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS 16-20

Carefully read Part Two, Chapter One of Albert Camus's *The Stranger*, beginning with Meursault's lawyer's visiting him in prison, and ending with the magistrate's sitting down in his chair after discussing his concerns with Meursault. Then, select the best answers to the following questions.

16. Meursault's inability to give the lawyer information about how he felt when Maman died is due to Meursault's lack of
 - A. confidence.
 - B. self-awareness.
 - C. knowledge.
 - D. tact.
 - E. personal responsibility.
17. Since Camus does not place Meursault's answer to his lawyer's question in normal quoted dialogue, and since the novel is a recollection of events, how can you best describe the narrator?
 - A. convincing
 - B. cautious
 - C. unreliable
 - D. beguiling
 - E. mendacious
18. The lawyer and the magistrate question Meursault on matters that are unrelated to his crime, specifically on the question of whether or not he loved his mother. Camus is suggesting that the legal system within the novel values
 - A. rationality and intellect.
 - B. past events over not present events.
 - C. justice in all areas of life.
 - D. details unrelated to the case.
 - E. human emotions over relevant fact.

19. In this passage, Meursault is distracted by the conditions of his environment, primarily the temperature in the room. His state of distraction is significant because it suggests that physical conditions of existence (physical comfort and safety) are
- A. more important than self-judgment.
 - B. necessary for making judgments.
 - C. more important than emotional conditions.
 - D. an important aspect of prison care.
 - E. necessary for clear thinking.
20. In Part One of the novel, Meursault has little to no belief in the concept of love. How can you best describe the magistrate's attempt to question Meursault on whether or not he believes in God?
- A. far-fetched
 - B. fearful
 - C. foolish
 - D. futile
 - E. fanatical

PRACTICE MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS 21-25

Carefully read Part Two, Chapter Five of Albert Camus's *The Stranger*, beginning when Meursault recollects a story that his mother told him, and ending with the chaplain's coming into the scene. Then select the best answers to the following questions.

21. Meursault's view of the guillotine as a method of execution is significant. What term can best describe Meursault's view of the relationship between the executor and the to-be-executed?
 - A. contrary
 - B. complementary
 - C. polar
 - D. paradoxical
 - E. ironic
22. Meursault's imagining of guillotine design suggests that he believes empirical knowledge is important because
 - A. hearsay can be exaggerated.
 - B. experience is the best teacher.
 - C. people cannot be trusted.
 - D. it is the only way to learn something.
 - E. learning by faith can be unreliable.
23. In this passage Meursault's visual observation skills are not useful to him, yet he still is an observer. What type of observer is he in this passage?
 - A. tactile
 - B. aural
 - C. olfactory
 - D. kinetic
 - E. objective
24. Which of the following terms best describes Meursault's view of human life?
 - A. ruthless
 - B. careless
 - C. nihilistic
 - D. destructive
 - E. inhumane
25. Camus has Meursault dismiss memories of Marie but recollect his mother in order to remind the reader that
 - A. human relationships can transcend physical interaction.
 - B. humans can be affected by non-physical stimuli.
 - C. physical existence is just part of some fuller existence.
 - D. physical interaction is not more important than non-physical interaction.
 - E. humans tend to place more importance on physical interaction.

Multiple Choice Answers with Explanations

1. While the streetlights do turn on during the course of the passage, we are given no evidence that he watches them every night (A). We also do not get enough information to gauge his fondness for observing the sky (B), or eating in the open air (D). His near-lifeless reaction to the soccer revelers suggests that it is not likely he is awaiting the return on the local soccer team (C). **The apparent urgency in which the narrator returns to the window to eat his chocolate reveals that he strives to maximize his time to observe the town and the natural world (E).** This is further shown by the fact that the narrator absorbs sensory data without giving much analysis.
2. We are not given any information that the narrator thinks the first group saw a romance (A), a comedy (C), a drama (D), or a musical (E). **The narrator suggests that the first group of returning moviegoers saw an adventure (B).**
3. While it is plausible that they *could* make dents in the sidewalk (A), the reader is not given explicit evidence that the boys deface the town's property. It is clear that the boys want to get the attention of the girls (C), but they do so by bumping into them. Even though the cracks could be considered to be mean comments about passersby (B) the primary meaning of "making cracks" is making jokes and we do not get any information about them being negative. The phrase does not indicate the making of sounds to disturb townspeople (E). **The phrase "make cracks" refers to the boys making jokes to cause their friends to laugh (D).**
4. The lamps do signify the passing of time from day to night (A), but that is not the best answer because it does not offer any deep meaning that would come out of the narrator's focus on the lamps. The lamps do not symbolize man's inventions affecting the natural world (B) because there is no suggestion that they actually change any natural process. While the lights cause the narrator's eyes to water, they do not show how light has the ability to affect a person's actions (D) in and of themselves. We are also not given information that the lamps necessarily indicate that there are rigid times accepted by society to perform certain actions (E). **The effect of the street lamps' turning on is basically that the narrator has increased amount of time to observe the town and the townspeople (C).**
5. He is not exactly vigilant (B) because we are not given information about the purpose or intent of his watching. While his descriptions are indicative of visionary activity, especially with the emphasis on color, the narrator is neither forward thinking nor entranced in any type of dream state—therefore visionary (A) is not the best answer. Clearly, the narrator is not verbose (E), as he uses simple language to express his observations. While the narrator's yearning for observing might be considered versatile as it adapts to the outside stimuli, the narrator himself is not versatile (D). **The word that best describes the narrator is voyeur (C) because the narrator shows an atypical urge to watch people—he is a watcher.**

6. While this scene does show how humans can have fun with the natural world (E), this answer is superficial and not indicative of deeper analysis. Toward the end of the novel we do see that this game could be a characterization of Marie and Meursault's relationship (B), but we are not given such information in this passage alone. This game may tease the reader into thinking that Marie has a childish personality (D), but this moment in the text is not enough to make such a rash decision on her character. Even though the dissipation of the sea foam suggests that life is brief (A), the best answer is that **the game gives the reader a metaphor for the positive and negative experiences of life (C)**. We can understand this by seeing how much fun the narrator has while playing the game, but then his mouth stings with saltiness. This suggests the ebb and flow of good and bad experiences. Just focusing on the dissipation of the sea foam alone does not look at the full metaphor of all of the components of the game.
7. There is a chance that the narrator's definition of love is different from Marie's definition (A), but that is not the best answer, as we will come to understand it toward the end of this explanation. There are no signs that the narrator is necessarily against a committed relationship with Marie (C). While it can be argued that the narrator's relationship with Marie is purely physical (D), that is not the best answer because there are hints that suggest otherwise (for example, how Marie's laugh makes the narrator swoon). The narrator could be playing "hard to get" by not wanting his feelings to be known to Marie (E), but it is the case that the narrator does offer some kind of opinion on the matter. Therefore it is more likely the case that **the narrator is reluctant to conform to typical social concepts (B)**. This is clarified with the narrator's statement about how love does not mean anything to him. That kind of statement seems to come from someone who does not invest in such concepts.
8. Raymond's use of the word *sweetheart* is within a tumultuous scene, and therefore could be considered envious (B) except for the fact that he does not seem to be necessarily jealous of the woman's situation; rather he is trying to get back at her for some kind of offence. His use of *sweetheart* is not endearing (C), as he is in the middle of an argument with someone he wants to be hurt for wrongdoings. While the scene in general has a serious tone, his use of *sweetheart* does not come across to the reader as being serious (D). Raymond is trying to be somewhat of a joker, but not in a jovial, lighthearted sense (E)—he is being **sarcastic (A)**.
9. The scene in which Raymond argues with the unnamed woman could lead the reader to believe that Raymond is typically comedic and childish (A), but that answer is lacking because although he can appear comedic to the reader, he is not as such in the story. Raymond could also be considered asinine and concerned (E) in other parts of the novel, but not during this exact scene. Raymond also appears to be tough and emotional (C), but this is not the best set of descriptors because of the fact that his shakiness toward the end of the argument can indicate fear or a lack of toughness. Raymond is also somewhat stubborn and narrow-minded (B), but he seems to know what he is doing both to the woman, and the police officer. Therefore, Raymond is best described in this scene as **angry and manipulative (D)**.

10. Marie's lack of appetite could be ascribed to a few things in this passage, but there is a better cause out of the set given. You could say that she was traumatized by Raymond's domestic dispute (A), but we are told earlier in the passage that she was feeling sad. Being a weekday, she could be concerned about getting to work on time (B), but that is not the best choice because we are not given any indication that she is running late for work. We learned earlier in the passage about her previous day's activities, and therefore she may have been too exhausted from the beach the day before (C); however, we have evidence that she may be tired from other physical activities with Meursault—in addition being tired does not necessitate a lack of appetite. Marie also may have been worried about Salamano and his dog (E), but she had laughed about Salamano earlier in the passage. **The best answer is that she was upset that the narrator does not love her (D).** This answer fits best because it appears to be the thread that runs from the time where the narrator tells her that he does not buy into the concept of love until the end of the passage. Marie is too sad to eat because she was let down by the narrator and his lack of love for her.
11. Meursault is afraid of taking too many personal phone calls at work, but it is unclear that he is absolutely opposed to them (E). While Meursault seems to be the type of character who is concerned about his productivity (C), we are not given enough information in the text to make such a robust claim. Also, we are not given reason to believe that Meursault is behind on work projects (D) because we are not given much detail into his actual career. While he may be worried that taking too many phone calls might cause him to lose his job (A), **the best answer is that he is afraid of being reprimanded by his boss (B)**—we know this because right after he gets off the phone his boss calls Meursault to his office. Meursault thinks he is going to be talked to about being on the phone and not working enough.
12. Meursault's boss talks with him about a potential relocation to Paris. Meursault's reaction tells a lot about the type of person he is. We are not given information to suggest that Meursault is ungrateful (A) even though it might seem that his unenthusiastic reaction might be perceived as such. Meursault's reaction is also not judicious (B) in any normal sense of the word, even though it is plausible to posit some kind of Meursaultian judiciousness. Meursault is also not ardent (C), either in agreeing to the new position, or ardent with his somewhat non-opinion. While it could be argued that for a moment Meursault's reaction was ambivalent (E) because he never gave his boss a clear answer, **it is best to categorize his reaction as being apathetic (D) because Meursault just seemed to be devoid of opinion.**

13. Meursault at times in the novel seems to be cautious (A) in his thoughts about an issue, especially at the apparent cageyness referenced in the previous question, yet that is not the best answer because of how quickly his claim seemed to arise in the text with little to no deliberation. His claim could be considered feeble (C), but that is not the best answer because of the fact that his claim does not necessarily lack strength in argument (even though it can be interpreted as being a cheap thing to say). His claim could also be avoidance (D), but only if it were because of the fact that it closes Marie's argument down instantly. The problem with that answer is that we are not given much information that would lead the reader to think that Meursault is trying to avoid this type of talk with Marie. His claim could also be considered divisive (E), but again, we are not given information that suggests that Meursault is purposefully trying to cause a split in the relationship—even if his claim does that anyway. **The best answer is that his claim is reasoned (B)** because in an epistemological sense, Meursault cannot get inside of Marie's mind. His understanding of this is logical, and because so, reasoned is the best answer.
14. Like Salamano's dog, people can disappear (A) out of people's lives in many different ways, but that is not the best answer because Meursault offers a suggestion that leads to a more robust answer as will be made clear momentarily. The fact that people change (C) is not the best answer because Salamano's situation does not necessarily deal with any change within a relationship. While it is possible to suggest that Meursault would say that within human relationships, people are interchangeable (D), it is not the best answer because it seems to be the case that Meursault understands the uniqueness of individuals. While it is true that humans are (scientifically considered) animals (E)—we are not given much in the text to support this claim even though Meursault would probably consider the claim in a pejorative sense. **The best answer is that people are replaceable (B)**—that is, people within unique relationships are replaceable, as Meursault suggested that Salamano should just get a new dog as if it is something that could be replaced (Remember that Salamano's relationship with his dog resembles a human-human relationship, especially considering the way Salamano talked to the dog). We will see later in the text, how this view becomes more clearly applied to human relationships.
15. While Salamano and Meursault each experience a different type of loss in Part One of the novel, their distinct situations can be viewed together. The term that best describes how they mirror one another is not antithesis (B) because they are not exactly the direct opposite of each other, even though they are not equal in gravity. Their situations are also not quite binary (C) because they are not necessarily connected to each other. While there may be hints of irony (D) involved in looking at both of these situations, it is not the best answer because there is not a robust enough detectable irony to make such a claim. While a major theme of the novel is fatalism, the mirroring of these situations is not best described as being a coincidence (E) because even though you could claim that both characters' situations are coincidental, how they mirror for the reader is not. **The best answer is that the relationship of these two events can be best described as a foil (A).**

16. Meursault can appear confident at times in the novel, but during this passage his inability to give the lawyer information is not due to a lack of confidence (A). Giving information to a lawyer seems like a perfunctory task. While you can argue that he has a lack of knowledge (C) of his feelings, that is not the best answer because it is not definitively the case. He also lacks tact (D), but this is not the best answer because he probably could be tactful if he forced himself to be so. It is unclear whether Meursault lacks personal responsibility (E); while it is plausible, it is not the best answer because Meursault seems to think that the question is irrelevant. **The best possible answer is that Meursault lacks sufficient self-awareness (B)**, specifically of his emotional state, in order to make a clear-cut response to the lawyer. (This could be due to the emotional trauma of his mother's death, and does not necessarily indicate that he is a cold-hearted person).
17. This question isolates a moment in the passage that can be used to study both dialogue and narration. While Camus seems to give us the lawyer's portion of the dialogue in direct quotation and Meursault's through third-person narrative, there is a sense that the exchange between Meursault and the lawyer is convincing (A). Upon close analysis, however, the lack of direct quotation seems to be suspect. There is a sense in which the narrator is being cautious (B) insofar as the information he is revealing to the reader, but that is not the best answer because it is hard to substantiate. The narrator is also not beguiling (D) because he is not trying to enchant the reader into believing his story. In addition, describing the narrator as being mendacious (E) is accurate, but it is too strong of a judgment because it cannot be substantiated fully. **The best possible answer is that the narrator is unreliable (C)**; the way he delivers his portion of the conversation with the lawyer seems to be sketchy and open to doubt.
18. The legal system representatives in the novel want information about Meursault that does not have to do with his crime, and this fact is integral to the plot. Camus uses this aspect of the novel to suggest that the legal system in the novel may value things other than the truth. While it is ideal that the legal system would value rationality and intellect (A), it is not the best answer because they are really interested in Meursault's feelings. While the legal system representatives tend to focus more on Meursault's past than his actual crime, they do not lose sight of the reason why he is involved with the system in the first place; therefore, the answer that they value past events over present events (B) is not the best answer. There is not enough information in the passage to make the claim that the legal system values justice in all areas of life (C) because they only focus on a small window of Meursault's life (from his Mother's death to his crime.) It is plausible that the legal system values details unrelated to the case (D), but we are given a sense that these apparently unrelated details do play into Merusault's crime somehow. **The best answer is that Camus portrays the legal system within the passage (and the novel) as valuing human emotions over relevant fact (E)**. They constantly ask Meursault questions that deal with his emotional state at current times in his life.

19. In this passage, Meursault tells the reader about how his physical discomfort impedes his ability to pay attention to what is going on around him. His state of distraction is significant because it brings up the importance of physical comfort and safety. Those conditions of existence are more important than self-judgment (A) but that is not the best answer because there is no evidence to suggest that his physical distraction necessarily impedes Meursault's ability to self-judge. In addition, there is no evidence to suggest that his physical distraction is more important than emotional conditions (C); emotional conditions and physical conditions seem to be complementary. Meursault's physical condition is not suggested to be an important aspect of prison care (D) because prison is not supposed to be a comfortable place (in the novel). It can be argued that agreeable physical conditions are necessary for making judgments (B) but this is not the best answer because even judgments that are clouded are judgments. **Therefore the best answer is that agreeable physical conditions are necessary for clear thinking (E)** because it is agreed that comfortable physical conditions must be met before proper cognition can take place.
20. The magistrate's attempt to question Meursault about whether he believes in God is not far-fetched (A) because the magistrate's questioning seems reasonable. The magistrate's attempt is potentially fearful (B), yet he seems to be quite courageous in his attempt. There is a degree in which you could say the magistrate is foolish (C) in his attempt to question Meursault, yet he seems to be living out a moral imperative. While some readers might think that the magistrate is being fanatical (E) in his attempt, we are not given enough information to suppose that the magistrate is ignorant of Meursault's inability to humor him. The best answer is that the magistrate's attempt is futile (D) because it is clear that Meursault wants nothing of the Magistrate's offer.
21. Meursault theorizes the collaboration into which executed and executor enter into in which both hope for a speedy and successful execution. The connection is not really contrary (A) or polar (C) because Meursault describes it as a collaboration. It is possible to describe the relationship as complementary (B), but this describes ultimately too general a relationship. There is a sense in which Meursault's claim about the relationship is ironic (E), but it is not the best answer because the relationship is not robustly ironic. **The best answer is that the relationship is paradoxical (D)** because of the fact that these two positions are dependent on each other yet they also seem to contradict one another. The collaboration involves the executed's hoping for a speedy and successful death.

22. Meursault's imagining the guillotine design suggests that he believes empirical knowledge is important. While there is a notion given that hearsay can be exaggerated (A), it is not the best answer because there is nothing to say that hearsay cannot be truthful. The fact that people cannot be trusted (C) is something that Meursault would probably say, yet there is nothing that says people are untreatable. Some people might suggest that empirical knowledge is important because it is the only way of learning something (D), but it is not the best answer because one can learn false information through empirical means. There is also a sense that learning by faith is unreliable (E), but it is not the best answer because learning by faith can be reliable, especially considering that Meursault has faith that the photograph he is looking at is an accurate portrayal of a guillotine. **The best answer is that experience is the best teacher (B);** Meursault thinks that experiencing things is a robust way of knowing things.
23. While it can be argued that Meursault does perform some tactile (A) observation in his prison cell, it is not the best answer because he does not exemplify such an observer. While there may be some smells in prison, and particularly bad ones at that, Meursault does not excel as an olfactory observer (C). While Meursault does sense feeling, not only of his physiological processes, but also of how his body feels against the wood of his sleeping area, he does not seem to earn the title of being an exemplary kinetic (D) observer. Meursault is not considered to be objective (E) here because of the fact that his senses are muddled due to the confines of his cell. **The best answer is that Meursault is best labeled as an aural (B) observer** because of the fact that his sense of hearing seems to be the focus during the passage when his other senses become useless. Meursault claims that his ears have never been so sensitive to sounds, which among other details, leads one to the claim that during this passage he is best described as an aural observer. Please note that this is before Meursault gains his senses after his fit of rage toward the end of the passage, at which time he not only has sight of the stars, but smells of the outside world.
24. Meursault's view of human life in this passage is explicitly stated. While his view might be considered ruthless (A), this is not the best answer because it does not really mean that Meursault has a lack of compassion. His view can be considered careless (B), but that is not the best answer because it seems that his telling of his view to the reader is a calculated act, not a carelessness one. His view is destructive (D), but only insofar as if another person were to use his view in order to commit horrible acts; therefore it is not the best answer because it is not necessarily destructive to Meursault. At first his view might seem inhumane (E), but it is not the best answer because it seems more naturalistic as if it is human nature to die anyway. **The best answer is that his view is nihilistic (C)** because he seems to think that life has no meaning, so then it does not matter when someone dies.

25. Maman's coming back into Meursault's mind is an important part of this passage because it is similar to Marie's coming back into Meursault's mind. Meursault rejects the memories of Marie, but Maman makes a lasting impression as a conveyor of information. The fact that humans can be affected by non-physical stimuli (B) is somewhat true in this passage, but it is not the best answer because what is being explored in this passage is not necessarily stimuli, but human relationships. This could be Camus's reminding the reader that physical existence is just part of some fuller existence (C), to the extent where Maman lives inside of Meursault's mind, yet we are not given enough information to truly substantiate that claim. It can be argued that Meursault's rejection of the memories of Marie and the acceptance of the memories of his Mother reminds the reader that physical interaction is not more important than non-physical interaction (D), but it is not the best answer because it appears that neither of them trump the other one—that they can be equally powerful. The idea that humans tend to place more importance on physical interaction (E) is true for Meursault in the case of Marie, but with the case of recollecting his mother's stories it is not the case. **Therefore, the best answer is that human relationships can transcend physical interaction (A).** This is true because Meursault's relationship with his mother at this point is a completely mental one, and there is evidence that Meursault could have a mental relationship with Marie, if only it were not painful or extraneous for him,

The Stranger

Part One, Chapter One

1. What is significant about the ambiguity in the first paragraph of the chapter?

The ambiguity in the first paragraph ultimately sets up what will become a greater sense of ambiguity as the novel progresses. It is important for Chapter One because it forces the reader to be skeptical about the reliability of the narrator, and whether or not we can believe the action in the chapter.

2. How would you characterize Madame Meursault's opinion of being in the nursing home based on Meursault and the director's conversation?

According to the conversation, Madame Meursault seems to be at peace with the fact that she is at the home especially when thinking about her small cadre of fellow nursing home dwellers.

3. Explain how the point of view of this chapter forces the reader to consider the narrator's psychological state.

The first-person point of view forces the reader to consider the narrator's psychological state because we are delivered splotchy information—bits and pieces of information, as well as incomplete information. Also, the point of view also captures the stress that might come with the death of a loved one.

4. How does Meursault earn the title “stranger” in this chapter?

Meursault earns the title “stranger” when he goes to the home for his mother's vigil and funeral service. From what we can tell from the text, Meursault is a mysterious figure to the other people at the home. In addition, he is also still a stranger to the reader because we do not get to know much about him yet.

5. What is significant about Meursault's not wanting to see his dead mother? (Pay close attention to how other characters react about this.)

The caretaker seems puzzled about Meursault's choice not to see his dead mother in the casket. While it might seem that it is normal not to want to look at the dead to pay respect, Meursault's choice not to see his mother appears to be a social misstep. This also is significant because it suggests a disconnect in his relationship with his mother before she died.

6. What effect do the short, declarative sentences have on the meaning of the chapter?

The short declarative sentences give the chapter a simple feeling. They also play into the idea that Meursault, the narrator, is in a stressed mental state because of the death of his mother. They also give the feeling that we are in the mind of Meursault—as they seem like quick thoughts.

7. What can be said about Meursault's perception of the progression of time versus the reader's perception of the speed of the narrative?

This question can be tricky, but the idea behind it is that Meursault experiences the action in the chapter as something that happens rapidly with little to no time to process it. Yet, the reader can perceive the chapter as progressing more slowly due to the fact that there is so much information to think about. The idea that there is so much ambiguity in the chapter tends to make the reader process the action more slowly. Ultimately, the chapter does not merely flash before the reader's eyes like the action in the chapter does for Meursault.

8. This chapter asks a major question about the protagonist. Namely can Meursault be characterized as being self-absorbed?

Since the narration of the chapter contains a lot of Meursault's thoughts about himself and how he perceives things, it is possible to say that he is self-absorbed. This also raises the question of whether or not this type of narration leads the reader to characterize the narrator as self-absorbed in the first place. Yet, there is a lot of information in the chapter that pushes the reader to think of Meursault as being self-absorbed, especially due to this apparent lack of empathy.

9. Why is Monsieur Pérez an important character in this chapter?

Pérez is an important character because he serves as a foil to Meursault. Pérez mourns Madam Meursault's death in a way that we do not see of Meursault. We also get information that Pérez is closer to Madam Meursault than her son was to her. Therefore, Pérez is important to provide contrast to Meursault's character.

10. Describe the light imagery in this chapter.

Light imagery plays an important role in this chapter because it is the first of many occurrences of light imagery. Specifically for this chapter, however, light seems to affect Meursault in a negative way almost as if it is literally blinding. Even when there is some darkness at the nursing home, the lights get turned on which puts him essentially in a constant state of light during the whole chapter. This becomes more important as we see light and darkness playing an important role in the novel.

Part One, Chapter Two

1. What is significant about Marie's reaction to the news that Meursault is mourning his dead mother?

Marie's reaction is similar to the responses Meursault received when he did not want to see his mother in the casket. Meursault seems to be breaking a social norm by going out and doing leisure activities. It is also possible that she is shocked that she could not tell that he was upset.

2. Based on what we learn about Meursault in Chapter One, what is important about his realization at the beginning of this chapter?

Meursault wakes up thinking about his boss's reaction to his request for time off. This suggests that Meursault has the capability to think about people outside of himself and is possibly not as self-absorbed as he came across in the previous chapter. This information complicates his characterization.

3. Explain Meursault's attraction to Marie. How does his attraction expose further character traits? What are those traits?

Meursault's attraction to Marie appears to be purely physical. This type of attraction alone suggests that Meursault does not really give too much thought to the emotional aspects of attraction. Furthermore, it suggests that Meursault is most impacted by physical stimuli and not so much immaterial stimuli like the concept of love, or emotions.

5. In what way can Meursault be described as a voyeur?

Meursault has a penchant for observing his community from his patio. The reason that he can be labeled as a voyeur is because he has somewhat of an obsessive way of always watching his community and his neighbors.

6. How does the turning on of the streetlights mirror an occurrence from Chapter One?

Again, this is light imagery that causes Meursault to react. Specifically it tires his eyes and is a factor in his decision to go inside and stop observing for the night.

7. Describe the word choice during Meursault's observation scene.

The prose during the observation scene is rich with detail and the diction, or word choice, contributes to its richness and vividness as if the reader is observing just as Meursault observes (i.e. through Meursault's eyes).

8. Analyze the plot structure in this chapter.

The plot structure in the chapter seems more tangible than the first chapter. There are clear shifts in setting and in time. The structure makes the reader able to understand Meursault's weekend routine—as the structure feels like a routine.

9. Since this chapter is set during the weekend after Maman's funeral, how, if at all, does the mood change from the closing of Chapter one?

The mood does not appear to change from the closing of the previous chapter from where Meursault was relieved to be home. This chapter's mood is relief due to the normalcy of his weekend as if nothing bad had ever happened (which Meursault points to at the end of the chapter.)

10. What influenced Meursault's decision not to go to Céleste's restaurant?

Meursault appeared to not want to be interrogated by any fellow restaurant goers. In a way, this is a detail that points to the fact that maybe Meursault has been affected by his mother's death and does not want to talk about it with anyone.

11. How can you best describe Meursault's relationship with the community in which he lives?

Meursault is on the fringe of his community—he is neither really involved with anything, nor is he totally an outlier. He goes about his business without much meaningful actual interaction with people and can be described as an introvert and a loner.

Part One, Chapter Three

1. What is the significance of Meursault not knowing the exact age of his mother?

Again this is a moment of ambiguity within the text. More importantly it speaks to the disconnection within the relationship between Meursault and his mother, a fact that seems to build as the novel progresses.

2. Characterize Salamano's relationship with his pet dog.

Salamano's relationship with his dog resembles a relationship that an elderly couple would have. They are both deteriorating in health and get on each other's nerves. They are stuck in a routine and appear to be dependent on one another, at least for the sake of Salamano's mental stability, and his dog's ability to do things that dogs need to do (walk, pee, eat, etc.).

3. Characterize Raymond.

Raymond is a cunning rabble-rouser with a quick temper. He is also somewhat likeable due to his machismo qualities. He seems to have the ability to manipulate people because of his persuasive skills, brawn, or a mix of thereof.

4. Knowing what we know about Meursault, what is significant about his agreement to dine at Raymond's?

Meursault thus far does not seem to be the type of person to go out of his way to hang out with a stranger (unless they are an attractive female). This is significant because it shows how persuasive Raymond can be. It seems to make the characterization of Meursault difficult because you cannot claim that he is an absolute recluse.

5. Compare Meursault's and Raymond's view of women.

At this point in the novel we have a sense that Meursault's view of women is mostly objective—that they are good for physical enjoyment but not so much for emotional connection. Raymond's view of women is somewhat complex because he seems to be both objectifying as well as hyperemotional when it comes to women and his relationship with them. Raymond prescribes to a male-dominant relationship model where the man always has to have the upper hand.

6. How is time portrayed in this chapter?

Time is treated a couple of ways in this chapter. One way is that Salamano and his dog are on a rigid time schedule as to when they perform their respective activities. Second is how Meursault gets caught up in a conversation with Raymond, which mirrors the whirlwind funeral service earlier in the novel.

7. Why is Meursault's realization that the letter he is writing is to a Moorish girl?

This question's answer takes a little finesse because it is contingent upon knowing the historical background of the text, namely the French settlement of Algeria. Meursault's realization is one that is based on differences of ethnicity, which brings with it the whole French versus Arab conflict—and so Raymond's rift with this woman becomes indicative of said conflict.

8. How do the multiple settings of this chapter contribute to the chapter's overall meaning?

The reader follows Meursault to multiple locations during this chapter including his work and Raymond's apartment. Such activity makes the reader believe that Meursault leads a normal life, even though earlier in the novel it seems as if Meursault does not spend any time away from his window. However, readers may feel as if they are experiencing information overload. As the novel progresses, this chapter stands out as one in which a good deal of information is given as far as learning about various places around town as well as the characters that become important in the development of the plot of the novel.

9. Meursault wants to go home to eat potatoes for dinner, yet Raymond offers him a dinner of meat. What does this suggest about Meursault's economic status?

While it is not really easy to substantiate the claim based on the meal choice alone, we already know that Meursault did not have the capital to take care of his mother on his own. Therefore there is a sense that a meat dinner would be more expensive than potatoes, which is something that would be more affordable than meat. Yet, it could be the case that Meursault just wanted to eat potatoes.

10. What role does Chapter Three play in the development of the novel's plot?

The reader is given a lot of information in this chapter namely on the front of the introduction of characters. We meet Salamano and his dog, as well as Raymond. We also get a lot of information regarding Meursault's character traits based on the interactions he has with the aforementioned characters.

Part One, Chapter Four

1. How does the character Emmanuel help characterize Meursault?

We learn in the previous chapter that Emmanuel is one of Meursault's co-workers. In this chapter, Meursault goes to the movies twice with Emmanuel, showing that Meursault does have some kind of social life, although Camus does not spend too much time developing it. The fact that Emmanuel does not understand the movie, and that Meursault has to explain what is going on, suggests that Emmanuel has some kind of perception or comprehension problem. While it seems that Emmanuel is something of a throwaway character, he does act as a friend to Meursault, suggesting further that Meursault is not just a homebody.

2. Analyze the game Meursault and Marie play in the sea (paying attention to imagery) and consider what it suggests about life in general.

Meursault and Marie's sea scene is somewhat placid, yet beyond the innocuous surface the game suggests something about the cyclical nature of good and bad life events. Camus uses imagery of the rise and fall of the waves, the gossamer-like nature of the sea foam, and the effect of the saltwater in Meursault's mouth. All of these things combine to comment on the cyclical nature of life events, the delicate and fleeting nature of life, and the idea that even the most positive events have a sort of negative characteristic as signified by the "salty bitterness" in Meursault's mouth.

3. Marie is strongly affected by Meursault's claim that he does not love her. Analyze how this contributes to Meursault's world view?

This moment in the chapter is important because Camus reveals an important part of Meursault's world view through Meursault's apparent denial of the concept of love. Furthermore, it appears that Meursault generally does not recognize typical social norms, or believe in things that are generally held as objective truth.

4. Analyze Meursault and Marie's relationship in this chapter as a conflict.

Meursault and Marie's relationship tends to take on the role of being a conflict due to the fact that their world views are different. For example, Meursault's view of love versus Marie's view of love—and Meursault's lack of outward emotion versus Marie's outward emotion. We even begin to see that Meursault's view of the relationship as something that is purely physical, whereas Marie is yearning for something more robust.

5. Analyze Meursault's lack of dialogue during the scene of Raymond's domestic dispute.

When Meursault and Marie get to the scene of the domestic dispute, Marie makes a comment that the dispute was awful. Meursault fails to make any comment to her about the dispute. Only after Marie asks Meursault to fetch the police does he make a comment. Yet the comment is only about his opinion of the police, which has nothing to do with the dispute scene. Meursault's lack of commentary suggests that either he does not care about the dispute, or he is desensitized. The contrast between Meursault's reaction and Marie's reaction also comments on Meursault's lack of outward emotion.

6. Analyze how Raymond's knowledge of the police works as a symbol of an ineffective criminal justice system that may not objectively protect and serve.

While it seems as if the police can handle Raymond's fit of rage, we are told that Raymond knows how the police work as if he has the ability to manipulate them. This raises a host of questions as to whether or not Raymond intimidates the police or whether Raymond has had many run-ins with the law. Raymond's knowledge of the police might allow him to manipulate them, which in turn decreases the effectiveness of the police to do their job properly.

7. How, if at all, does the reader's understanding of Raymond change in this chapter?

The macho Raymond of the previous chapter yields to a Raymond who seems to suppress his emotions until they bubble up and explode. Raymond appears to be more vulnerable than he seemed to be in the previous chapter. This type of characterization is typical of Camus in this novel, whereas Camus offers a slow revealing of characters, which adds to the complexity of the narrative.

8. Meursault agrees to be a witness for Raymond. What does that say about Meursault's ability to be manipulated?

Meursault's association with Raymond is unique because it raises the question whether or not Raymond is manipulating Meursault. There is a sense that Meursault is intimidated by Raymond. The reader can, therefore, claim that Meursault was forced into being a witness for Raymond based on the fact that Meursault is affected by Raymond's power. Yet, we learned earlier that Meursault can offer things to Raymond that Raymond lacks—that is, Meursault develops into the brains and Raymond is simply the brawn.

9. Describe the irony in Salamano's observations at the fair coupled with the fact that his dog is lost.

This part of the chapter is a very accessible moment of irony. Salamano stopped to look at an exhibit on escape artists, and realizes that his dog has "escaped" from him. This moment is actually one of the only humorous moments in the novel due to how silly the moment of irony is.

10. What effect does the lost dog have on Salamano? On Meursault? How do their situations play into the theme of loss?

Salamano's dog was his best friend, even though at times it seemed as if the dog was the bane of Salamano's existence. Salamano is distraught about the loss of the dog, and that affects Meursault because Meursault thought about the loss of his mother. Salamano and his dog exemplify the theme of loss that began in the first chapter of the novel. Even though Salamano's relationship with his dog is not similar to Meursault's relationship with his mother, they are tied together by the theme of loss.

Part One, Chapter Five

1. How does the apparent Arab pursuit of Raymond possibly allude to the French and Arab Algerian conflict?

Earlier in the novel, we learned that Raymond's estranged love interest is "moorish," thus establishing the possibility of an ethnic conflict. The fact that the Arabs seem to be pursuing Raymond suggests that there is the possibility of retaliation. While this does not necessitate an ethnic conflict, it is possible and very likely that Camus is setting up this conflict to play into the idea of being a "stranger" or an "other." The ethnic conflict in the novel is an important part of the plot as it may be the motivating factor for later events.

2. Analyze Meursault's conversation with his boss, paying attention to how Camus structures the conversation.

Meursault's conversation with his boss about a possible promotion further indicates Meursault's lack of ambition. What is interesting about the structure of the conversation is that Meursault recounts what his boss is saying to the extent to which the boss is doing all the talking, which is then matched by Meursault's lack of interest. The conversation is also a microcosm of a theme of the text itself, that any life is just as significant as any other life. That is something Meursault expresses again later in the novel.

3. Marie speaks about marriage to Meursault. Explain how Meursault's opinion is consistent with his view of love given previously in the novel.

Previously in the novel, Meursault told Marie that love did not mean anything to him. In this chapter, he suggests more of the same, yet with a little more intensity. When Marie asks Meursault about marriage, he is ambivalent, stating that it does not make much of a difference either way. Marie asks him about love again. This time Meursault is a little stronger with his answer saying that he most likely does not love her. This is important because it is consistent with what Meursault has said previously, yet he also takes a stronger stance on the issue suggesting that he is not as apathetic on the issue as previously suggested. This conversation deepens the conflict between Meursault and Marie.

3. What is the reader supposed to take away from Meursault's comments to Marie about Paris?

Meursault's comments to Marie about Paris seem like a throwaway, but it is an odd moment in the text where Meursault actually reveals a glimmer of a tangible opinion. The reader should note that the reasons he does not like Paris are the opposite of why he likes to live in Algeria. One interesting note about his comments, especially the comment about the complexion of Parisians, might shed further light on the Arab/French ethnic crisis in Algeria. Perhaps Meursault is making an ethnic claim about the paleness of Parisians. Needless to say, Meursault's comments show that every line of this novel counts.

4. Meursault observes a little woman at Celeste's restaurant. Explain how the little woman can act as a foil to Meursault.

When Meursault goes to Celeste's restaurant to have dinner, a woman asks whether she can sit with Meursault. Meursault observes the woman and tells the reader about her idiosyncratic behavior. He mentions toward the end of the scene that she was "peculiar." The little woman poses a problem for the reader because she is mysterious, yet when thinking about her as a foil for Meursault, her role becomes clear. Like Meursault, the little woman seems to be disconnected from society as if they both are outsiders (strangers). While Meursault's public behavior is not as bizarre, the fact that he followed her to observe her is strange. The contrast between Meursault and the little woman is telling about Meursault's hyper-curiosity.

5. What does Meursault's advice to Salamano about replacing his dog suggest about how Meursault understands relationships?

Meursault suggests to Salamano that he could just get another dog, which suggests that Meursault does not fully understand the connection that can form between a man and a dog. Of course that could be due to experience—yet it raises the question of whether or not Meursault thinks this would be the same for humans in human relationships. That is, they can be replaced as if even relationships are meaningless. (We see that kind of idea with Meursault's view of his relationship with Marie, which is somewhat nihilistic.)

6. What connects Meursault to Salamano and his dog, other than that they are neighbors?

The reader is told that Maman had liked Salamano's dog, which connects Meursault to Salamano in a way more than neighbors. For what it is worth it may be the case that Salamano telling Meursault about Maman's opinion of the dog connects Salamano losing his dog to Meursault losing his mother. Even if Meursault claims that his mother's death did not really affect him, the reader cannot be so sure. That becomes even clearer toward the end of the novel.

7. What is important about Salamano's understanding of Meursault's decision to put his mother into the nursing home?

Salamano's understanding of Meursault's decision to put Maman into a nursing home gives some outside verification to Meursault's decision. The fact that Salamano understands that Meursault could not take care of her gives Meursault's choice more validity. This is something that becomes more important as the novel progresses.

8. Meursault claims that he cannot know what is going on inside of Marie's mind. What does this suggest about the reader's position to figure out what Meursault is thinking (think about skepticism)?

The reader is implicated when Meursault claims he cannot know what is going on in Marie's mind because the reader is then forced to ponder whether it is possible to really know what is going on in Meursault's mind—bringing his whole narrative into a skeptical light. Meursault is skeptical as to what Marie is thinking because as a strict skeptic he is correct—there is no way of knowing. Even though the reader is getting a glimpse into Meursault's mind, it is not objective information and we are subtly called to question whether or not we can really get into the mind of Meursault.

9. Upon reading this chapter do you think Meursault fits the label "Stranger"?

This question is somewhat of an interpretive question, yet it is an important one to have students think about. In this chapter we see that Meursault is socially and emotionally disconnected from the world in which he lives. He does not buy into the idea of marriage, and he does not seem to understand the gravity that a man's relationship with a dog could have. Although Salamano's relationship with his dog is not as important as a relationship between two humans, the dog relationship is more basic and therefore should be easier to understand—yet Meursault fails to understand it. However, the fact that Salamano and Meursault shake hands suggests that he is not a stranger to Salamano anymore—but on a different level he remains a stranger to the reader.

Part One, Chapter Six

1. Describe the mood created by Meursault's attitude in the beginning of this chapter.

Meursault's attitude in the beginning sentences sets the stage for the events that will transpire in this chapter. Yet, Camus quickly breaks Meursault's somber mood by describing Marie's physical beauty and the effect it has on Meursault. What is interesting about the opening of this chapter is that it takes a second read in order to see the way it alerts the reader to future events.

2. In this chapter we learn that Meursault testified for Raymond. What is significant about the fact that Meursault's testimony was not "checked"?

This is another mystery in the novel. It is possible that Raymond's crime was not that important to even look into witness testimonies—but perhaps it suggests that Meursault can be persuasive as he has shown earlier in the novel (with the letter). Furthermore, this suggests that since Meursault can be a persuasive liar to the authorities, he might just be able to do the same to the reader. This is another moment in the novel that tells the reader to exercise caution in taking what Meursault says as truth. Camus is having fun with the reader.

3. Meursault's inability to explain Raymond's conflict to Marie suggests what about conflict in general? What then, are we supposed to think about Meursault's narration of the novel?

Meursault's lack of meaningful explanation suggests that there is more to Raymond's conflict than the reader knows about. We have some basic understanding that Raymond had assaulted an Arab woman, but we do not get much information about the original grievance between Raymond and the Arab woman before the apartment incident. This again, may lead the reader to believe that Meursault's narration can be questionable due to the withholding of information. This will become more important as the novel becomes more and more complex.

4. Describe the conflict that develops between the Arabs and Raymond (and company) in this chapter.

In some ways this chapter becomes less about Meursault and more about Raymond's conflict with the Arabs in which Meursault has been implicated. This is an important moment of conflict in the novel because it may be the cause of Meursault's murder of the Arab at the end of the chapter. We have in this chapter a very clear picture of the Arab/French conflict that Camus crafts as an undercurrent in the novel.

5. Explain how the placid beach scene when the beachgoers arrive in Algiers works as a moment of foreshadowing.

The placid beach scene works as a moment that is a “calm before the storm.” Although that is a clichéd way of understanding the scene, it works as another moment where Camus is offering a warning to the reader. This scene’s peacefulness seems less peaceful and more foreboding as Raymond’s conflict hovers in the background.

6. In this chapter we see the concept of marriage in action with Masson and his wife. Characterize Masson’s marriage, paying close attention to the fact that Meursault is recounting this scene.

Masson’s marriage seems as ideal as the bungalow in which he lives. Masson’s statement that implies that he likes to spend his days off with his wife suggests a vibrant marriage—even to the point where Meursault sees their relationship and thinks that he might just get married. What’s strange about Meursault’s description of the scene is that one would think that if he was really trying to manipulate the reader, he’d shed some kind of bad light on Masson’s marriage, but he seems to be objective. This should probably remind the reader of the scene earlier in the novel where Meursault is observing, but not processing, what is going on in the town underneath his apartment window.

7. Analyze Meursault’s reaction to Raymond’s injury as a sign of Meursault’s ability to express emotions outwardly.

When Meursault and Raymond get back to Masson’s bungalow after Raymond’s injury, Meursault appears to be the only one in the room who is not affected by the injury. Marie and Madame Masson are visibly upset, but Meursault just retreats inside of himself and smokes a cigarette. This apparently stoic behavior makes the reader wonder whether Meursault is capable of expressing any emotions at all. The reaction is similar to his behavior at his mother’s vigil—he sat in silence smoking cigarettes. This is not to say that Meursault does not have any emotions, just that he does not outwardly show them.

8. What is significant about Meursault’s analysis of the gun, that you can “either shoot or not shoot.” Is this an expression of a person who believes in free will?

This is an interesting moment in the novel when dealing with fatalism versus free will. Meursault’s statement about the gun does not necessitate free will or fatalism because the wording is vague. The reader will have to decide whether Meursault’s comment suggests that one can decide to shoot or not, or that it is possible that either outcome can be decided by fate. Either way, Camus is asking the reader to grapple with these issues.

9. When Meursault walks on the beach alone, he seems to be affected by all kinds of external stimuli. How does the stimulation from the natural world create conflict for Meursault?

The sunlight and the heat it provides create a conflict for Meursault, suggesting that nature has the ability to affect one's actions. Nevertheless the conditions at the beach seem to affect Meursault in such a way that an apparent conflict emerges between the conditions and Meursault's ability to persist in them.

10. The conclusion of the chapter evokes an uncomfortable amount of ambiguity. What problems does this create for interpreting the scene?

Since the conclusion of the chapter is so ambiguous, the reader is not left with a definite view. Such ambiguity is important to detect because it impedes determining a single "correct" interpretation. There is a sense that everything happens so fast that not even Meursault knows how to tell the reader what happened, leaving a spotty narration with uncertain details. The implications of this scene reverberate through the rest of the novel, which will begin to center even more around Meursault.

Part Two, Chapter One

1. In what way does the focus on Meursault's perceptions illustrate the power of first-person narration?

This chapter allows the reader to be a little more intimate with Meursault's perception. That intimacy is something that a different narrative point of view would not allow. When trying to convey psychological states and perceptions, the first-person tends to offer the reader the highest degree of verisimilitude.

2. Why does Meursault's lawyer ask questions about Maman's funeral? Do these questions pertain to his case at all?

There is enough textual evidence to claim that Meursault's lawyer asks about Maman's funeral to see whether Meursault is capable of expressing emotions—perhaps questioning further whether Meursault has the ability to show remorse. The problem, however, is whether or not such prodding into Meursault's past is necessary for his murder case. This is a question that Camus develops throughout the duration of Part Two of the novel.

3. Knowing what you know about Meursault, what is significant about the fact that he “lost the habit of analyzing” himself in regard to the narration of the novel?

Again, this stresses a reoccurring message in the novel that the reader should not exactly trust Meursault's narration. Yet, there is something to his statement that suggests what we should already know about Meursault—that he knows more about the outside world because that is what he is best at observing. It is almost as if he is so busy looking outside himself that he has lost the ability to look inward at himself. In addition, his loss of analytical skills could stem from the fact that he has an attitude toward life that nothing matters.

4. What emerges as the relationship between Meursault and the legal system (lawyer, magistrate, etc.) in the early pages of the chapter?

The early pages of this chapter begin to build the conflict that will further emerge as the second part as the novel develops. The expression that Meursault has not had any dealing with the law is a signal to the reader that Meursault may have some problems when it comes to operating within the legal system that will be judging his crime. The conflict of man versus state apparatuses is emerging slowly in this chapter, but will take on a more forceful role in the narrative as the novel progresses.

5. Describe how Meursault's laziness in explaining his situation correlates with Camus's theory of the absurd?

Meursault's laziness suggests that he believes that there is nothing he can do about his situation; he considers defending his situation against the legal system to be irrational. This approaches absurdist thought because Meursault essentially gives up his defense early on, believing himself to be faced with the irrationality of his situation. There is a sense in the absurd that Meursault should just push on against the irrationality, but since he sees his defense as a meaningless action, he just gives up.

6. How does Meursault's apparent re-counting of the beach murder imprint the ambiguity of the last chapter?

Meursault's recounting of the murder has clarity insofar as he hits the major facts of what occurred that day. When thinking about the ambiguity of the last chapter, his apparent clarity raises some questions about whether or not Meursault was fully aware of his actions in the last chapter. Perhaps it is the case that he had formulated a story after thinking about it and being removed from the event by a period of time that gives him critical distance.

7. What is the ultimate unanswerable question posed in this chapter about the murder?

Even though Meursault seems to have a clear understanding of what happened at the beach when he killed the Arab, the reader is faced with a question that is ultimately unanswerable— why did Meursault shoot the body multiple times when it was already on the ground? Nevertheless, the question raised is an important one for the reader because it may be what convinces the reader of Meursault's awareness of his crime. This is an instance of Camus making the interpretation of his text to be more complex and is an example of how this fiction works as a philosophic text.

8. Is it significant that Meursault rejects God, or is it part of what we know as something within the scope of his worldview?

When Camus actively introduces God into the novel, the reader is given yet more evidence of how the novel works as philosophic fiction. In some ways, it is significant that Meursault rejects God, but within the context of the novel, it appears as if the rejection fits right into Meursault's worldview. For example, he does not buy into the construct of love and marriage, why should the reader expect him to suddenly embrace God? While the rejection of God becomes an important plot point, it does not necessarily change how the reader has already perceived Meursault.

9. Meursault realizes he is a criminal. Explain how his realization acts as an epiphany.

There is evidence early in the chapter that suggests that Meursault is aware of his actions as criminal, mainly the fact that he recounted the scene with clarity and that his laziness to defend himself may imply guilt. What is important in this chapter is that Meursault tells the reader that he realizes he is a criminal, which may be a turning point for Meursault insofar as his gaining of self-awareness and self-analysis that he did not have before this moment in the chapter. While he is not fully used to the idea of being a criminal at this point in the novel, the realization has occurred and such realization is significant to his characterization.

10. Critique the smoothness of the legal bureaucracy as perceived by Meursault at the end of the chapter. How does this further develop the conflict between Meursault and society?

Meursault's narration toward the end of the chapter suggests that the legal system runs smoothly and almost comfortably as he feels like part of their "family." His feelings are significant for the fact that the reader is aware that the legal system and Meursault are actually engaged in a conflict, and we can already start to think about who is going to be the winner of the case. His comfortable feelings from being in the smooth bureaucracy of the legal system further the conflict for the reader because it seems as if Meursault is being manipulated by how well the legal system is treating him.

Part Two, Chapter Two

1. Explain how the first two sentences of this chapter are effective in continuing the development of Meursault's self-awareness.

The opening lines of this chapter are indicative of a well-crafted narrative in which every part contributes to an overall effect and meaning. Meursault tells the reader that he did not think he would enjoy talking about his life in prison, yet he says further that he got over his distaste. This suggests that Meursault's self-awareness is continuing because he has a greater ability to talk about himself and his experiences.

2. Explain how Meursault's sea view from his prison cell is symbolic of freedom.

Through the window of his cell, Meursault can see the ocean. The view recalls for the reader a handful of scenes in which Meursault was happy at the beach with Marie, swimming in the ocean. Therefore, this sea view can be interpreted as a glimpse of his past freedom, as well as a reminder of what he has lost because of his actions. Perhaps the sea view is also symbolic of the murder, which happened at a beach, therefore providing an additional reminder to Meursault why he is in prison.

3. When Marie visits Meursault, he is ever observant of the other inmates and their visitors. How does this scene echo other scenes in which Meursault is an active observer?

This scene should remind the reader about earlier scenes in the novel in which Meursault is overcome with his urge to observe everyone around him. His urge to observe seems to distract him from his conversation with Marie. This scene also may work like the window view of the sea insofar as it reminds Meursault of the time when he was free to observe at will.

4. At the end of the conversation scene, Meursault witnesses a mother and son's goodbye. How does that event work as a counterpart to something in Meursault's own past?

This moment in the chapter is almost too apparent for the reader, as if Camus is really making a glaring reference to Meursault and Maman. There is something to take away from this scene. We have a son saying goodbye to his mother, something that Meursault did not have the ability to do with the robustness of when both parties are alive. This scene is powerful for the fact that the mother actively places her hands into the bars of the holding cell to wave goodbye to her son. Whereas Meursault's goodbye, or lack of goodbye to Maman was passive.

5. What does Meursault mean by making the distinction between thoughts of a free man as opposed to thoughts of an imprisoned man?

This question is easy on a superficial level, but as you look deeper into it, there are some things that are exposed about how we need to treat the narration in the second part of the novel. On a basic level, Meursault claims that there is a difference between the thoughts of a free man and the thoughts of an imprisoned man; the imprisoned man's thoughts are focused heavily on the past, while the free man is focused on his present. This distinction should invite the reader to consider how the narrative has changed because of Meursault's altered status.

6. What is significant about Maman entering Meursault's train of thought?

There is evidence to suggest that the previous scene with the mother and the son saying goodbye to each other had planted something in Meursault's mind. Yet, the fact that Meursault had brought up something that Maman had once told him may be indicative of the fact that he was just not a problem son because he listened to what she had to say to him as he was growing up. This also suggests that maybe there is not as big of a disconnect between Meursault and Maman as previously suggested.

7. What makes Meursault different from the rest of the prisoners? Why is that important?

Meursault has the ability to understand the punishment he is enduring. This is important because it shows that Meursault is able to understand his condition, and that he has the ability to cogently think about himself, his condition, and what his crime implies.

8. Explain how the story on the newspaper clipping works as an allegory.

The newspaper clipping story works as an allegory because it presents a story with a hidden meaning that may be useful in analyzing the novel in which the story is imbedded. The newspaper story reveals the potential for human nature to go wild because it shows that even the most apparently well-adjusted people can commit senseless acts of violence. Furthermore, Meursault seems to think that the story is quite natural because of the fact that the victim of the story should not have been playing games. (Meursault's reaction that the story seems far-fetched suggests that he has read too much literature because it does seem a little contrived.)

9. Camus leaves the reader with another puzzling chapter ending. Does Meursault gain a full sense of self-awareness at the end of the chapter?

The slow building of Meursault's self-awareness seems to climax with a fuller sense of self-awareness as Meursault hears the sound of his own voice. Hearing the sound of your own voice is a very rudimentary perception. Therefore, Meursault's ability to hear his voice distinctively is representative of his fuller self-awareness. There is a sense that this awareness may be too little too late, yet the fact that he gained this awareness is a good thing.

Part Two, Chapter Three

1. The beginning of this chapter addresses the passage of time. How does this affect the narrative?

The beginning of this chapter indicates the non-sequential narration of the novel. Before this chapter, time jumps have occurred; for example, the 11-month investigation into the murder. The passage of time also allows the reader to feel the disorientation that Meursault felt in prison trying to determine the time and season. This is important for the narrative because it suggests that Camus has left some information out of the novel in order to force readers to make conclusions for themselves—putting the reader in an existential position of subjective interpretation.

2. What changes occur to Meursault's position as a watcher and how does this contribute to the self-awareness he reached previously in the novel?

Meursault realizes that he is being watched, which is a reversal of Meursault's normal role as the watcher. This is important because it complements Meursault's gain of self-awareness as he begins to realize the gravity of his situation. This is also an important motif in the novel, to take a situation and flip it around to provide contrast.

3. The courtroom reporter has mentioned that Meursault's case has been "blown up." What does that say about the relationship between an individual and society?

Camus is doing something interesting with the role of the news media. As if Meursault has not already been under assault from society via the legal system, he becomes the target of a media that distorts his story for their own benefit. There is a sense that Camus is raising an ethical argument here with the role of the press, but it furthers the conflict that Meursault is currently battling with the society outside of himself.

4. How does temperature play a role in this chapter (think about previous scenes in the novel)?

The heat in the courtroom is a distraction for Meursault and makes the reader recall the beach murder scene when Meursault was overtaken by heat, sun, and other natural stimuli. The heat in the courtroom acts as a connection to the beach as well as the murder in general, as if Meursault has to relive the crime during his trial.

5. What is significant about the courtroom confusion in the first half of the chapter?

The significance of the courtroom confusion is that previously in the novel the reader had been given details to suggest a smooth and organized legal system. The tumult of the courtroom makes the reader question the organization of the prosecutors, defenders, and the legal system representatives. That further indicates the possibility of the legal system's inefficiency, and questions can emerge such as whether or not Meursault is being fairly tried.

6. What do we learn about the scope of Meursault's trial?

The scope of Meursault's trial is far-reaching because of the legal system's heavy focus on matters that do not directly pertain to the crime for which he is being tried. There is a sense that Meursault's entire life is being judged, when the focus of the legal system should be on determining whether he is a murderer. This also complicates the narrative because the reader does not have a full view of Meursault's life and is left with the feeling that the things not related to the crime do not pertain because there is no information about them in the first place.

7. Explain the significance of the focus on Meursault's actions at Maman's funeral vigil and funeral.

This question has similar characteristics to the previous one, but it has different implications for the narrative. For example, the focusing on information that does not pertain to his crime is questionable, but the focus on his behavior at Maman's funeral weaves the scene into the other times in the novel where the death of Maman has been examined. (Not limited to the beginning of the novel, the relationship between Salamano and his dog, the mother and son saying goodbye in the prison, etc.) The focusing on these specific events further creates a recursive narrative.

8. Describe Meursault's defense.

Meursault's defense can be described as a series of repetitive, empty statements. While the testimonies of his defense team (including witnesses and friends) appear to be genuine, they are generally ineffective when matched against the finesse of the prosecutorial team. The ineffective nature causes the reader to feel uncomfortable about Meursault's defense, as if his guilty sentencing is inevitable.

9. Camus uses Meursault's case to offer a problem to the reader, namely whether or not life's actions impact each other, or mean anything at all. Describe how that concept works in this chapter.

The problem that seems to be addressed in this chapter is whether or not there is any causal link between all of our human actions. Camus addresses that problem as well as the question as to whether or not our actions are meaningful. The combination of those two things packs a powerful philosophical punch that is not only a dense philosophical problem, but also a hinge by which the novel's interpretation swings. First, the prosecutor wants to draw a casual link between Meursault's treatment of Maman and his murder of the Arab. Second, there is a general mood of ebullience from Meursault's position as if nothing he can do at this point in the novel matters much.

10. Explain how the last line of the chapter echoes the philosophy of fatalism.

The last line in the chapter, narrated by Meursault, suggests that a singular path in life could lead to one place as it could well lead to another. This further suggests that such path's ends have already been determined, which is a fatalistic sentiment. Meursault's comments make it seem like his destiny is outside of the power of his will.

Part Two, Chapter Four

1. How does the opening of this chapter mirror the closing of the previous chapter?

This chapter opens with Meursault's experiencing a feeling of helplessness, and his inability to control the outcome of his trial. He states that things are happening to him without his participation in them and this evokes the fatalistic ending of the previous chapter—as if fate happens and we have no say in its outcome.

2. The prosecutor's claim that the murder was premeditated, coupled with the lack of information for the reader to determine such status, suggests what about the crime?

This is something of an interpretive question, yet an analysis of the information addressed by the question is necessary to understand the plot. The prosecutor claims that the murder was premeditated; yet there is nothing in the information that Meursault gave the reader to suggest that. This is important because of the problems that arise when the reader is faced with an unreliable narrator. Even though Meursault did not give us information that would lead to the conclusion that he premeditated the crime, it does not mean that he did not. In fact it could be said that he left out the information to get the reader onto his side of the argument. Yet, there are times in the novel when Meursault is believable—for example the scenes where he is observing people. Perhaps the lack of information about premeditation stems from the fact the Meursault did not have enough self-awareness at the time of the crime, therefore leaving him at a loss of information.

3. Meursault comments on human qualities and how they can be viewed from different perspectives. Specifically, good qualities can be “crushing” for a guilty criminal. What is Camus trying to convey to the reader?

Meursault's reflection about how some human qualities are positive for the non-guilty person and negative for the guilty person is interesting because it provides insight into how society constructs the particular characteristics that place people in groups good, bad, or otherwise. Camus is possibly suggesting that notions of “good” and “bad” are relative qualities, not absolutes.

4. What effect does the other trial have on Meursault's trial?

This is yet again another moment where Camus is creating a contrasting relationship. This time Camus is contrasting Meursault's trial with the other trial that is apparently more important. There is such media frenzy over the other trial that it enters into Meursault's courtroom to the extent where the reader can detect that Meursault is not given an objective trial. His crime is being judged simultaneously with and against the other trial that is about to take place.

5. Does Meursault's suggestion that the sun caused him to fire his gun seem to make sense to the reader?

Meursault's suggestion about the sun being the reason why he fired, as if the sunlight startled him and he accidentally pulled the trigger, is interesting because we are given information earlier that Meursault was affected by the sunlight (just like he was affected by the heat in the courtroom). Even though the courtroom thinks his claim is bogus, the reader cannot help but think that Meursault's claim actually can carry some truth.

6. What does Camus suggest about Meursault's defense in this chapter?

Meursault's defense is so ineffective because Meursault's lawyer does not let Meursault give him any input as if his lawyer knows the situation better than Meursault does. The veritable dog and pony show that is Meursault's defense further suggests the notion of fatalism in which the outcome of Meursault's life is not to be influenced by his will.

7. What does Meursault's statement beginning with "in the end" suggest about the narration of the novel?

Camus does not (even for a moment) let the reader think that Meursault is a reliable narrator. Meursault enters an extended moment of reverie when he is not paying attention to the courtroom proceedings. The reader has seen this before in the beginning of the novel at Maman's funeral, when Meursault seemed to retreat and hide in his mind instead of perceiving the things that are going on around him. This suggests that the narration cannot be taken as reliable because it is often impossible to tell when Meursault is paying enough attention to tell the truth about a situation or not. (Sadly, this could render any interpretation of this novel as useless; therefore the novel essentially becomes a vehicle to see philosophy in practice and less a piece of fiction.)

8. What is significant about Meursault's lack of superficial feelings for Marie?

The reader must remember the power that Marie's physicality had over Meursault. The fact that her smile does not move Meursault to feel anything suggests that not only are Marie and Meursault disconnected, but also Meursault's ability to express emotions is impaired. As in his relationship with Marie, he did not feel anything in his heart. That is similar to the earlier scenes in the novel in which Marie asked whether he loved her. The real answer then could be that he did not because he did not feel it in his heart. Meursault seems to have the ability to know his feelings at this point in the novel, and the final clarification of his feelings about Marie seem to put their relationship at rest for good.

9. How does Camus's styling of the verdict scene contribute to the overall mood of the chapter?

After Meursault's crime, the narrative seems to progress slowly because of the time it took to investigate the crime and to set up the trial. The verdict scene is crafted in such a way that there is an immediate feeling that things are speeding up. The verdict and its after-effects seem to sweep the reader like a whirlwind which not only offers a hurried mood, but also one that suggests that maybe the trial was not that important in the first place because it was just swept away to make room for the next case.

Part Two, Chapter Five

1. Analyze the apparent jump in time that the reader becomes aware of early in this chapter? How does it affect the narrative structure?

The start of the chapter is somewhat disorienting because it just drops the reader into the continuing narrative in medias res, which affects the narrative structure by signaling to the reader lost time and ultimately the idea of a non-sequential narrative. What this also does is force the reader to think about how much other information was withheld throughout the course of the novel. Camus is perhaps telling the reader to withhold interpretation of the overall novel, just as he has withheld information on which to base an interpretation.

2. What is significant about Meursault's attitude about his situation in the first paragraph in this chapter?

Meursault appears to feel remorse, not for the murder, but his actions (or, more accurately, his inaction) during his trial. This shows that Meursault has the ability to look at his past with a critical lens as if he were actually paying attention to what was going on around him at all times (not just in bouts of reverie). So again, Meursault seems to become a little different for the reader because once we think we can characterize him fully, we learn something different about him.

3. Again, Maman pops into Meursault's mind. Why is this important for the reader?

Meursault's recollection of Maman is important for the reader because it reveals that Maman did have an effect on Meursault, and that he is thinking about her and what she has taught him. Perhaps this is because the court had made him feel guilty for some type of grievance leveled against his mother—but maybe he remembers her because it is a trapping of his life when he was a free man.

4. What does Meursault's reformed execution scheme (random poisonings) say about his world-view?

Meursault's contrived execution plan in which criminals would drink a mixture that would kill a certain percentage of them is strange because it suggests that he thinks the world should operate on a random basis. The idea of living in an irrational world may suggest that the world is random and that there is no underlying rationale that holds it together. Meursault's idea is that there would be a slight chance that a criminal would not die, unlike other forms of execution. Recall earlier in the novel when Meursault suggests that life is essentially random, that one path can take you to a certain place just as well as it can take you to another place—as if life was just a game of chance.

5. What is Camus suggesting about human knowledge based on Meursault's misunderstanding of the guillotine design?

Camus reaffirms an empirical theory of human knowledge when he has Meursault misunderstand guillotine design because he has never seen one before. Meursault's vision of a guillotine is based on some romanticized design from the era of the French Revolution. When Meursault sees the picture of the more rudimentary guillotine designs he immediately reforms his idea—his knowledge is augmented by the verification of what a guillotine actually looks like.

6. Explain Meursault's view of death in this chapter and then state why it is nihilistic.

Meursault expresses the fact that each person is going to be faced with death at some time in his or her life. Yet, Meursault puts a different spin on this view that seems self-focused and not optimistic insofar as he does not think there is something positive about life no matter how long or short. This further suggests Meursault as a nihilist, for whom nothing matters and life is meaningless no matter how long or short it is.

7. How does Meursault's assertion that he does not want any help change from the previous chapter?

In the previous chapter, Meursault expressed a feeling of hope with his appeal, even though he quickly rid himself of that sentiment. The fact that he rejects any help in this chapter suggests that he has become content with his sentence because there is nothing he can do about it at this point. There is enough evidence to claim that Meursault has given up with the idea of willing his way out of his situation and has accepted his future.

8. Meursault suggests or seems to suggest that he could have lived his life another way. How is this stance compatible with a fatalist world view?

Fatalism suggests that a person is set on a predetermined life track where there is nothing they can do to will into, or will out of, a situation. Meursault's suggestion that he could have lived his life in another way suggests that he believes in the power of his will to determine what happens in his life. For example, the reader is asked whether or not Meursault willed the murder of the Arab. When he suggests that he could have lived his life differently, the question as to whether or not he willed the murder comes with it—and the answer is most likely yes.

9. Does Meursault fully accept the nihilist worldview toward the end of the chapter? Analyze the ending of the novel paying close attention to the unanswered questions that it raises. Also, consider how the ending of the novel breaks traditional plot structure (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and dénouement.)

Meursault sees an “indifferent” world, which suggests that Meursault’s view of the world is ambivalent rather than nihilistic. Yet he suggests that the end of life is the end, as he focuses on the things that happen in the beginning of lives—he explains this by describing how Maman’s taking of a significant other is like her playing from the “beginning” of life again. The end of the novel culminates the problem of interpretation that starts on the first page of the novel. The reader cannot be so sure that Meursault is ever executed. The novel does not have a resolution as texts that have a more traditional plot structure do. The fact that it ends without much of a resolution places onus on the reader to figure out what happens. The open-endedness of the novel helps categorize it as philosophical fiction, as any text that needs to invite inquiry needs to be relatively open-ended.

The Stranger

Part One, Chapter One

1. What is significant about the ambiguity in the first paragraph of the chapter?

2. How would you characterize Madame Meursault's opinion of being in the nursing home based on Meursault and the director's conversation?

3. Explain how the point of view of this chapter forces the reader to consider the narrator's psychological state.

4. How does Meursault earn the title "stranger" in this chapter?

5. What is significant about Meursault's not wanting to see his dead mother? (Pay close attention to how other characters react about this.)

6. What effect do the short, declarative sentences have on the meaning of the chapter?

7. What can be said about Meursault's perception of the progression of time versus the reader's perception of the speed of the narrative?

8. This chapter asks a major question about the protagonist. Namely can Meursault be characterized as being self-absorbed?

9. Why is Monsieur Pérez an important character in this chapter?

10. Describe the light imagery in this chapter.

Part One, Chapter Two

1. What is significant about Marie's reaction to the news that Meursault is mourning his dead mother?

2. Based on what we learn about Meursault in Chapter One, what is important about his realization at the beginning of this chapter?

3. Explain Meursault's attraction to Marie. How does his attraction expose further character traits? What are those traits?

5. In what way can Meursault be described as a voyeur?

6. How does the turning on of the streetlights mirror an occurrence from Chapter One?

7. Describe the word choice during Meursault's observation scene.

8. Analyze the plot structure in this chapter.

9. Since this chapter is set during the weekend after Maman's funeral, how, if at all, does the mood change from the closing of Chapter one?

10. What influenced Meursault's decision not to go to Céleste's restaurant?

11. How can you best describe Meursault's relationship with the community in which he lives?

Part One, Chapter Three

1. What is the significance of Meursault not knowing the exact age of his mother?

2. Characterize Salamano's relationship with his pet dog.

3. Characterize Raymond.

4. Knowing what we know about Meursault, what is significant about his agreement to dine at Raymond's?

5. Compare Meursault's and Raymond's view of women.

6. How is time portrayed in this chapter?

7. Why is Meursault's realization that the letter he is writing is to a Moorish girl?

8. How do the multiple settings of this chapter contribute to the chapter's overall meaning?

9. Meursault wants to go home to eat potatoes for dinner, yet Raymond offers him a dinner of meat. What does this suggest about Meursault's economic status?

10. What role does Chapter Three play in the development of the novel's plot?

Part One, Chapter Four

1. How does the character Emmanuel help characterize Meursault?

2. Analyze the game Meursault and Marie play in the sea (paying attention to imagery) and consider what it suggests about life in general.

3. Marie is strongly affected by Meursault's claim that he does not love her. Analyze how this contributes to Meursault's world view?

4. Analyze Meursault and Marie's relationship in this chapter as a conflict.

5. Analyze Meursault's lack of dialogue during the scene of Raymond's domestic dispute.

6. Analyze how Raymond's knowledge of the police works as a symbol of an ineffective criminal justice system that may not objectively protect and serve.

7. How, if at all, does the reader's understanding of Raymond change in this chapter?

8. Meursault agrees to be a witness for Raymond. What does that say about Meursault's ability to be manipulated?

9. Describe the irony in Salamano's observations at the fair coupled with the fact that his dog is lost.

10. What effect does the lost dog have on Salamano? On Meursault? How do their situations play into the theme of loss?

Part One, Chapter Five

1. How does the apparent Arab pursuit of Raymond possibly allude to the French and Arab Algerian conflict?

2. Analyze Meursault's conversation with his boss, paying attention to how Camus structures the conversation.

3. Marie speaks about marriage to Meursault. Explain how Meursault's opinion is consistent with his view of love given previously in the novel.

3. What is the reader supposed to take away from Meursault's comments to Marie about Paris?

4. Meursault observes a little woman at Celeste's restaurant. Explain how the little woman can acts as a foil to Meursault.

5. What does Meursault's advice to Salamano about replacing his dog suggest about how Meursault understands relationships?

6. What connects Meursault to Salamano and his dog, other than that they are neighbors?

7. What is important about Salamano's understanding of Meursault's decision to put his mother into the nursing home?

8. Meursault claims that he cannot know what is going on inside of Marie's mind. What does this suggest about the reader's position to figure out what Meursault is thinking (think about skepticism)?

9. Upon reading this chapter do you think Meursault fits the label "Stranger"?

Part One, Chapter Six

1. Describe the mood created by Meursault's attitude in the beginning of this chapter.

2. In this chapter we learn that Meursault testified for Raymond. What is significant about the fact that Meursault's testimony was not "checked"?

3. Meursault's inability to explain Raymond's conflict to Marie suggests what about conflict in general? What then, are we supposed to think about Meursault's narration of the novel?

4. Describe the conflict that develops between the Arabs and Raymond (and company) in this chapter.

5. Explain how the placid beach scene when the beachgoers arrive in Algiers works as a moment of foreshadowing.

6. In this chapter we see the concept of marriage in action with Masson and his wife. Characterize Masson's marriage, paying close attention to the fact that Meursault is recounting this scene.

7. Analyze Meursault's reaction to Raymond's injury as a sign of Meursault's ability to express emotions outwardly.

8. What is significant about Meursault's analysis of the gun, that you can "either shoot or not shoot." Is this an expression of a person who believes in free will?

9. When Meursault walks on the beach alone, he seems to be affected by all kinds of external stimuli. How does the stimulation from the natural world create conflict for Meursault?

10. The conclusion of the chapter evokes an uncomfortable amount of ambiguity. What problems does this create for interpreting the scene?

Part Two, Chapter One

1. In what way does the focus on Meursault's perceptions illustrate the power of first-person narration?

2. Why does Meursault's lawyer ask questions about Maman's funeral? Do these questions pertain to his case at all?

3. Knowing what you know about Meursault, what is significant about the fact that he "lost the habit of analyzing" himself in regard to the narration of the novel?

4. What emerges as the relationship between Meursault and the legal system (lawyer, magistrate, etc.) in the early pages of the chapter?

5. Describe how Meursault's laziness in explaining his situation correlates with Camus's theory of the absurd?

6. How does Meursault's apparent re-counting of the beach murder imprint the ambiguity of the last chapter?

7. What is the ultimate unanswerable question posed in this chapter about the murder?

8. Is it significant that Meursault rejects God, or is it part of what we know as something within the scope of his worldview?

9. Meursault realizes he is a criminal. Explain how his realization acts as an epiphany.

10. Critique the smoothness of the legal bureaucracy as perceived by Meursault at the end of the chapter. How does this further develop the conflict between Meursault and society?

Part Two, Chapter Two

1. Explain how the first two sentences of this chapter are effective in continuing the development of Meursault's self-awareness.

2. Explain how Meursault's sea view from his prison cell is symbolic of freedom.

3. When Marie visits Meursault, he is ever observant of the other inmates and their visitors. How does this scene echo other scenes in which Meursault is an active observer?

4. At the end of the conversation scene, Meursault witnesses a mother and son's goodbye. How does that event work as a counterpart to something in Meursault's own past?

5. What does Meursault mean by making the distinction between thoughts of a free man as opposed to thoughts of an imprisoned man?

6. What is significant about Maman entering Meursault's train of thought?

7. What makes Meursault different from the rest of the prisoners? Why is that important?

8. Explain how the story on the newspaper clipping works as an allegory.

9. Camus leaves the reader with another puzzling chapter ending. Does Meursault gain a full sense of self-awareness at the end of the chapter?

Part Two, Chapter Three

1. The beginning of this chapter addresses the passage of time. How does this affect the narrative?

2. What changes occur to Meursault's position as a watcher and how does this contribute to the self-awareness he reached previously in the novel?

3. The courtroom reporter has mentioned that Meursault's case has been "blown up." What does that say about the relationship between an individual and society?

4. How does temperature play a role in this chapter (think about previous scenes in the novel)?

5. What is significant about the courtroom confusion in the first half of the chapter?

6. What do we learn about the scope of Meursault's trial?

7. Explain the significance of the focus on Meursault's actions at Maman's funeral vigil and funeral.

8. Describe Meursault's defense.

9. Camus uses Meursault's case to offer a problem to the reader, namely whether or not life's actions impact each other, or mean anything at all. Describe how that concept works in this chapter.

10. Explain how the last line of the chapter echoes the philosophy of fatalism.

Part Two, Chapter Four

1. How does the opening of this chapter mirror the closing of the previous chapter?

2. The prosecutor's claim that the murder was premeditated, coupled with the lack of information for the reader to determine such status, suggests what about the crime?

3. Meursault comments on human qualities and how they can be viewed from different perspectives. Specifically, good qualities can be "crushing" for a guilty criminal. What is Camus trying to convey to the reader?

4. What effect does the other trial have on Meursault's trial?

5. Does Meursault's suggestion that the sun caused him to fire his gun seem to make sense to the reader?

6. What does Camus suggest about Meursault's defense in this chapter?

7. What does Meursault's statement beginning with "in the end" suggest about the narration of the novel?

8. What is significant about Meursault's lack of superficial feelings for Marie?

9. How does Camus's styling of the verdict scene contribute to the overall mood of the chapter?

Part Two, Chapter Five

1. Analyze the apparent jump in time that the reader becomes aware of early in this chapter? How does it affect the narrative structure?

2. What is significant about Meursault's attitude about his situation in the first paragraph in this chapter?

3. Again, Maman pops into Meursault's mind. Why is this important for the reader?

4. What does Meursault's reformed execution scheme (random poisonings) say about his world-view?

5. What is Camus suggesting about human knowledge based on Meursault's misunderstanding of the guillotine design?

6. Explain Meursault's view of death in this chapter and then state why it is nihilistic.

7. How does Meursault's assertion that he does want any help change from the previous chapter?

8. Meursault suggests or seems to suggest that he could have lived his life another way. How is this stance compatible with a fatalist world view?

9. Does Meursault fully accept the nihilist worldview toward the end of the chapter? Analyze the ending of the novel paying close attention to the unanswered questions that it raises. Also, consider how the ending of the novel breaks traditional plot structure (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and dénouement.)

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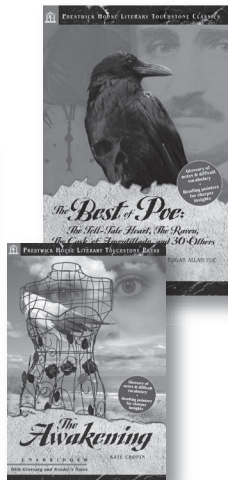
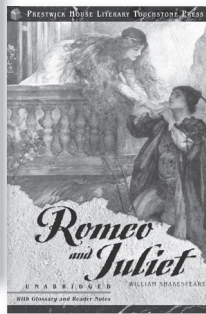
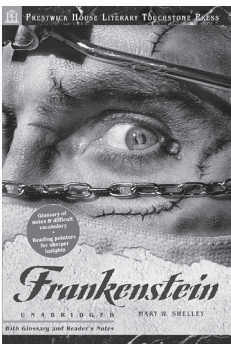
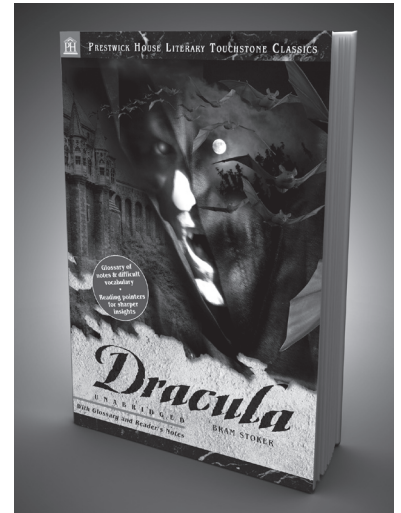
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