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ELA 12

The Stranger Read On Summary

The Stranger

Albert Camus

Fiction

Summary: The main character, Meursault, doesn't feel anything. He didn't cry at his mother's funeral, didn't bat an eye when his neighbor beat his girlfriend, didn't get excited when a girl told him she wanted to marry him, and didn't show emotion when he shot and killed another man. In the end, though, he realized that it was all okay because he lived how he wanted and once he died it wouldn't really matter to anyone anymore.

Are the characters believable? Why or why not?

As humans, we are supposed to care about each other and look out for each other. Sometimes, though, we could not care less. Meursault embodies that state of mind perfectly, but takes it to extremes by being indifferent all of the time, without exception. He said, "Nothing, nothing mattered, and I knew why," (121). Not even being convicted for murder and sentenced to beheading could budge him. His mind was on an all new level of distant. Still, when we think of the "crazy" people in society, who might commit mass murders for example, we have to realize that their state of mind is often different than our own. To do horrible things, they need to have a hard shell. Meursault is believable because at some point we have all felt like he did, or could at least imagine it to a lesser extent. What he did and how he acted is something I could expect of someone alive right now, in the real world, and an example from history I can think of is Hitler. To have ordered the killing of so many people he had to be at least a little off kilter, with a similar sense that Meursault had.

What is this story saying about humanity or about the world?

The soul isn't necessarily a solely religious part of a person. A "soul" could simply be someone's morality. This story is saying that humans today isolate their feelings from their outward actions. During his meeting with his lawyer, Meursault said, "I probably did love Maman, but that didn't mean anything," (65). Love is often the key ingredient to relationships between parents and their children. With Meursault, though, it was more of an obligation to him than anything. The lawyer was trying so hard to search for something inside of him, but he couldn't find it. The book is saying that we as a society are rendering feelings irrelevant because we don't give enough attention to them. Even in my experience, I've repeatedly been told to hide what I'm feeling because otherwise, I'll look weak. Still, I think the story shows that there's a light at the end of the tunnel. At the end, Meursault comes to terms with himself, the life he lived, and whatever was going to happen to him after he died. He accepted himself and everything he'd done and was finally happy. That says that although at first it may look like a long and grueling journey into nowhere, no matter where life takes us, we can still accept it and come to love it.