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School: Troy High School

Grade: Junior

Book Title: The Stranger

Author: Albert Camus

Rate 1-5 (1-lowest to 5-highest) - 3.5

Set in French Algiers, *The Stranger* tells the story of a Frenchman named Meursault who is different from the rest of society as a non-conformist incapable of morality. Meursault comes to Algiers after the death of his mother to attend her funeral. Weeks later, he kills an Arab man and receives a trial for his actions. However, his beliefs, attitude, and lack of morals differ greatly from the rest of society, isolating him in the universe and making him a true outsider. This experience causes Meursault to greatly contemplate the meaning of his existence and the inevitability of his actions, crescendoing to his absurdist epiphany and eventually the feeling of superiority. The novel ends with what Meursault would consider a “happy” ending.

While *The Stranger* is an easy read in terms of understanding the plot events, understanding what Camus is trying to convey can be difficult. Initially, I thought Meursault was an odd narrator and the descriptions of his actions and feelings made little sense; however, after deeply analyzing Meursault’s character and the symbols that surround him, I was able to understand his values and why he is happy at the end of the novel. Meursault is a character that feels close to no emotion and interacts with the world purely through physical means. Because this isn’t considered “normal”, Meursault is considered an outsider and a monster. The philosophy of absurdism recognizes that its beliefs do not agree with the rest of society, as it emphasizes that lack of meaning in the universe and the idea that life is absurd. Meursault believes that nothing truly matters, and by doing so goes directly against societal norms. Camus demonstrates with Meursault how society treats nonconformists: by branding them as outsiders or even inhuman. While I would not consider myself an absurdist, I found these ideas and the way that Camus executes them through the perspective of Meursault extremely interesting.

Even though the plot events themselves were not thrilling, the layering and symbolisms are exhilarating.

Although this novel can be difficult to truly understand, I highly recommend it for readers who like to dissect and analyze what they read, as well as those who are interested in philosophy, especially absurdism. I would not consider the novel worth reading for the plot, but rather for the deeper meaning and the central ideas that the author is trying to convey. *The Stranger* is similar to the play *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett, which also takes place in an absurd world. While *Waiting for Godot*'s central ideas are rather bleak and even tragic, it can be used to help understand and appreciate *The Stranger*.