The Stranger
Albert Camus
Language A: Literature       English III IB

RISING JUNIORS
Directions: Read *The Stranger* by Albert Camus (pronounced: al-bear camu) and answer the questions in this packet. You will need to complete the following:

1. the reading questions (pp. 14-20)
2. the assignments listed in Parts I and II (pp. 20-21) and

Read the concepts and information outlines on pages 3-11 – these will be very important concepts to know. Review the literary terms on pages 22-26.

Be prepared for a test to cover your summer readings: the novel and the terminology, upon returning to school. This packet is due on the first day of school, Monday, August 12, 2019. If you will be out of town, still on vacation, or otherwise indisposed, please mail with adequate time to reach me by the due date to:

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As you read, consider the following: (Just think about them and their role and significance to the work.)

**The People**

What is the role of each of the people in the novel? What does each symbolize? Which characters, if any, are essential?

- the director of the home
- the caretaker from the home
- old Thomas Pérez
- Raymond
- Masson
- Salamano
- Marie
- Céleste
Witnesses at the trial
- Maman
- the other mourners at the home
- Mersault's boss
- Raymond’s mistress and the Arab man
- the little woman from the restaurant
- Mersault’s lawyer
- the prison magistrate
- the presiding judge
- the chaplain

Do you think Mersault ever feels remorse for his crime?

The philosophies (paraphrased from Merriam-Webster)
- **Existentialism**: universe is unfathomable; individuals must assume responsibility without knowing right or wrong
- **Absurdism**: universe is irrational and meaningless; search for order brings individual in conflict with universe
- **Determinism**: occurrences are determined by proceeding events; predestined
- **Nihilism**: existence is senseless and useless; no such thing as moral truths
- **Naturalism**: scientific laws can explain everything; act based on natural desires
- **Stoicism**: individuals should be passionless, unmoved by joy or grief, and submissive to natural law

Read and highlight each of the following selections regarding the philosophies or contexts of the novel. I recommend only reading ONE section per day so you can digest the concepts presented in each.

**Overview: Existentialism**

The term "existentialism" is sometimes reserved for the works of Jean-Paul Sartre, who used it to refer to his own philosophy in the 1940s. But it is more often used as a general name for a number of thinkers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who made the concrete individual central to their thought.

- A backlash against philosophical and scientific systems that treat all particulars, including humans, as members of a genus or instances of universal laws.
- Our own existence as unique individuals cannot be understood as mere examples of anything
- Systems such as universal laws conceal from us the highly personal task of trying to achieve self-fulfillment in our lives
- Existentialists start out with a detailed description of the self as an "existing individual", who is involved in a specific social and historical world.
- The individual can only find fulfillment in understanding what is true and valid for him rather than blindly accepting imposed societal values and norms
Existentialists hold that humans have no pre-given propose or essence laid out for them by God or by nature; it is up to each one of us to decide who and what we are through our own actions (Sartre: "existence precedes essence"). What this means is that we first simply exist—find ourselves born into a world not of our own choosing—and it is then up to each of us to define our own identity or essential characteristics in the course of what we do in living out our lives. Thus, our essence (our set of defining traits) is chosen, not given.

Existentialists hold that people decide their own fates and are responsible for what they make of their lives. Humans have free will in the sense that, no matter what social and biological factors influence their decisions, they can reflect on those conditions, decide what they mean, and then make their own choices as to how to handle those factors in acting in the world. Because we are self-creating or self-fashioning beings in this sense, we have full responsibility for what we make of our lives.

Existentialists are concerned with identifying the most authentic and fulfilling way of life possible for individuals. In their view, most of us tend to conform to the ways of living of the "herd": we feel we are doing well if we do what "one" does in familiar social situations. In this respect, our lives are said to be "inauthentic", not really our own. To become authentic, according to this view, an individual must take over their own existence with clarity and intensity. Such a transformation is made possible by such profound emotional experiences as anxiety or the experience of existential guilt. When we face up to what is revealed in such experiences, existentialists claim, we will have a clearer grasp of what is at stake in life, and we will be able to become more committed and integrated individuals.

Existentialists start out from the assumption that it is no longer possible to believe that there is some transcendent justification or underlying ground for our existence. If God is dead, then we find ourselves "abandoned," "forlorn," "thrown" into a world, with no pre-given direction or legitimation. Though we seek some overarching meaning and purpose for our lives, we have to face the fact that there is no proper function of humans or plan in God's mind that tells us the right way to be human.

**A Primer of Existentialism**

"Godless" (atheistic)- Sartre, Camus, Simone de Beauvoir

Result of the collapse of France during WWII

"I can say no, therefore I exist."

"Godly" (theistic): Kierkegaard, Marcel, Maritain, etc.

Existence before Essence:

Man lives rather than "has being" (belongs to and is an example of a cosmic idea of man)

Each human life is unique: an "entire universe," the "center of infinity."
Reason is Impotent to Deal with the Depths of Human Life:

Human reason is weak and imperfect

There are dark places in human life that "reason scarcely penetrates" (a contradiction of Plato)

Uniting the "lower" (irrational) parts of the psyche with the "higher."

Man is therefore complex, difficult to define, and ambiguous

Alienation or Estrangement (Hence the novel’s title): Science and technology have resulted in man’s estrangement from nature, and, therefore, from god and himself.

"Untrammeled sexuality" is one path to reconnecting with nature

Institutions like cities, mass-markets, centralized governments destroy men’s individuality (his "own true self"), stifle free emotional expression such as love or passion

Anxiety: The death of the enlightenment during WWI. Continued during the Great Depression and WWII, and emphasized during the Cold War (man cannot insulate himself with material goods; he will cease to be. "When will I blow up?" - Faulkner)

The anguish of choice (Sartre). The responsibility of choice makes each life unique

Encounter with Nothingness: Man faces the void without hope of succor or salvation (the loss of ontological ground is therefore indicative of the absence of all meaning)

Freedom: Atheistic Existentialism: Man must accept individual responsibility, which results in freedom (negative connotation). In choosing action, man makes a statement of what man ought to be.

(Religious Existentialism): Freedom has resulted in man;s alienation from God. His job is to "heal the chasm."

In both, man must accept both the freedom to choose and the responsibility of choice.

Existentialism is about individualism:

- Truth is open to interpretation by the individual
- We experience truth as we find it.
• It is our responsibility to decide for ourselves what is true
• No man is more right than another
• Nothing exists for the individual until the individual gives meaning to it
• Fate, destiny or God do not determine what happens to men. Men determine what happens to themselves.

Existentialism does not support any of the following:
• The good life is one of wealth, pleasure, or honor.
• Social approval and social structure trump the individual.
• Accept what is and that is enough in life.
• Science can and will make everything better.
• People are good by nature, ruined by society or external forces.

Religious Existentialism (Kierkegaard): Emphasis on faith and commitment rather than blind acceptance of truths handed down by traditions in religion. One must determine one’s own faith and commitment to God, if that is what one chooses. The objective (only one right answer) question of whether God exists is not important. The subjective (many possible right answers) question of truth about God is important.

Atheistic Existentialism (Nietzsche): Religion is a crutch that weakens people because it gives them a place to put blame, rather than accepting blame for themselves.

The Life and Work of Albert Camus
Albert Camus was born in Monrovia, Algeria on November 7, 1913. His father, a soldier in World War I, died fighting for France during the first Battle of Marne in 1914. Although Camus never really knew his father, while he was growing up, and later as an adult, Camus was keenly aware of the circumstances of his father’s death. At an early age Camus was made painfully aware of the tragic effects of war, experiencing the consequences of political strife on a highly personal level.

Following the publication of The Stranger and several other important works, Albert Camus gained wide recognition as one of the leading French writers of his day. As he continued to produce critically acclaimed and controversial novels, plays, and essays, Camus would earn a reputation equal to other preeminent French authors of the time such as Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Andre Malraux. Camus’ work had a significant and lasting influence on a post-war generation concerned with political and philosophical issues that dealt with human alienation and the search for meaning in a troubled world.

After his father’s death, Camus, his mother, and older brother moved to Belcourt, a suburb of Algiers where they lived in poverty for many years. In 1930, while a high school student, Camus contracted tuberculosis and barely survived. When he recovered, Camus’ excellent grades in school helped get him admitted to the University of Algiers where he studied theater and wrote plays, essays, and fiction. Camus’ illness, however, was another significant event in his life and it gave him a new perspective on death and awareness of his own existence. While he also began to develop the political outlook and personal philosophy that would form the basis of all of his later work, the
inevitability of death would become an important theme in Camus’ work, one he would explore in much of his writing.

While he was attending the University of Algiers, Camus supported himself by working at a number of odd, part-time jobs, including one with the French Algerian civil service where he processed auto registrations and driver’s licenses. This dull, routine job made an impression on Camus; later he would incorporate elements of the experience in his writing of *The Stranger*.

In 1937, Camus’ first book *The Wrong Side and the Right Side* (*L’Envers et l’endroit*) was published in Algiers. It described his life growing up in Belcourt. In 1938, Camus was hired by *Alge-Republicain*, an anti-colonialist newspaper, where he took on a variety of editorial tasks, wrote literary reviews, covered local meetings, and wrote articles concerning the desperate conditions of impoverished Arabs living under French rule in Algeria. Of particular note was his description of the famine in Kabylia. In his article, Camus described the devastation within some Arab families where only two out of 10 children survived.

With the outbreak of World War II, Camus joined an underground anti-Nazi group based in Paris and became editor of the group’s resistance newspaper *Combat*. It was during this time that Camus wrote some of his most important work, including *The Stranger* (1942), and developed his theory of the absurd, which declared that life is essentially meaningless because of the inevitability of death. Camus, however, was never satisfied with the absurdist attitude of moral indifference. His experiences in occupied France, and other political events he witnessed, caused him to develop opinions on moral responsibility. Some of these ideas are contained in his *Letters to a German Friend* (1945), and in the essays included in *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death* (1960).

*The Stranger* is a striking example of Camus’ belief that “a novel is a philosophy put into images.” He believed that the highest art should contain elements of diversity and complexity, while maintaining a style that is balanced, uniform, and straightforward. Sartre immediately recognized the existential quality of *The Stranger*, although his opinion about the novel and its relation to existentialism would later prove to be controversial.

Other works by Camus that explore his philosophical and political ideas include *Caligula* (1944); *The Plague* (1947), a novel; the long, controversial essay, *The Rebel* (1951); and a third novel, *The Fall* published in 1957. His famous essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*, published in 1942, concerns Sisyphus, a Greek mythological figure who was condemned by the gods to spend an eternal, meaningless existence pushing a huge boulder up and over a hill, and then back again from the other side.

Following the publication of *The Fall*, Camus was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957. During his career, Camus became well known for his political views and activism. Although an anti-communist, he was an outspoken critic of capitalism, and he remained a proponent of democratic socialism and nonviolent confrontation. He believed in the principle of *le juste milieu* which recognized that the solution to human problems is not usually found in absolute strategies or ideas.
In 1960, Camus died suddenly in an automobile accident. Camus' work, and the political, religious, and ethical issues it deals with, remains controversial, but his writing endures because it expresses Camus' profound concern for human suffering and the philosophical and moral dilemmas faced by all individuals.

**Historical Contextual Background**

*The Stranger* takes place in Algiers, the capital of Algeria, a North African country located along the Mediterranean Sea. (Algiers is a port city, and the many ships that dock there bring a broad mix of people from other countries to the bustling city.) Also, because of its close proximity to Europe, the area known today as Algeria has had contact with other cultures for centuries. In 1942, when *The Stranger* was published, Algeria had been a colonial possession of France for almost a hundred years. Arabs, Europeans, and pieds-noirs—people of European descent born, as Camus was, in Algeria—all lived side by side in crowded Algiers. It was a situation that naturally gave rise to the tension and unrest that is reflected in *The Stranger*. The climate of North Africa, with its heat, sun, and beaches, also has a powerful influence on the events and characters in Camus’ book.

In 1830, the French invaded Algeria and began to promote European colonization of the country. Settlers from Europe confiscated Muslim land, created a separate society, and imposed their own culture on the native population. France finally conquered the northern part of the country in 1847, and gradually extended its influence to the south despite fierce local resistance. More than a million European settlers—mostly French—owned the country’s principal industrial, commercial, and agricultural enterprises. The majority of the 8.5 million Muslims had low paying jobs and often worked performing menial tasks for the Europeans. The native Muslim population had little political influence and lived in relative poverty compared to their wealthy colonial rulers.

The French created Algeria’s current boundaries in 1902. While most of the people living in Algeria today are Arabs or Berbers, in the nineteenth century, Europeans comprised almost 10 percent of the total population. The European impact on Algeria was enormous, with large European-style cities standing alongside ancient villages and tiny farms.

By the early 1900s, economic conditions in Algeria began to decline steadily as its growing population became increasingly restless and resentful of foreign rule. In addition, World War I had a devastating effect on all of the countries in the region. The political and economic impact of the war was great, and the psychological repercussions were equally traumatic. New technology, developed in the war, had greatly expanded the military’s ability to kill. The aftermath was horrendous. France alone lost over one million soldiers on the battlefield, with many more wounded and maimed. Adding to France’s political troubles after the war ended, Algerian nationalist movements began to fight for independence against the French. European settlers, now firmly established in the country, bitterly resisted any efforts to grant political rights to the Algerians.

It was into this highly charged atmosphere of racial tension and political unrest that Albert Camus was born. He would spend the first half of his life in this uneasy and difficult environment. Camus’ father had died fighting for France and Camus grew up
Acutely aware of the wholesale slaughter that took place during the war. By the time *The Stranger* was published, France and the world were engaged in another costly war, this time against Germany and the Axis powers. World War II was a conflict that would exact an enormous death toll and again have a significant influence on Camus’ thinking. The certainty of death would become a major theme in all of his work.

With the publication of *The Stranger*, Camus received instant recognition for his achievement, although reaction to the book was controversial and opinions were divided. Some, like Jean-Paul Sartre, would embrace its existential quality, while others considered it a political work addressing the problems of French colonialism in Algeria. Many critics felt the novel dealt with atheism and religion. In discussing Camus’ writing style in *The Stranger*, Sartre noted that “each sentence is a present instant…sharp, distinct, and self-contained. It is separated by a void from the following one.” Sartre goes on to explain his view of the philosophical significance of Camus’ style: “The world is destroyed and reborn from sentence to sentence…We bounce from sentence to sentence, from void to void.” Camus, however, would dispute much of what was said about his novel. Ultimately, *The Stranger* has become an enduring work of fiction because it is concerned not only with politics and racism, but also with universal philosophical themes and the basic dilemmas of the human condition.

**Absurdity**

Absurdity is a philosophical view at which one arrives when one is forced out of a very repetitive existence. As Camus says in “An Absurd Reasoning” from his essay collection *The Myth of Sisyphus*:

> It happens that the stage sets collapse. Rising, streetcar, four hours in the office or the factory, meal, streetcar, four hours of work, meal, sleep, and Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday and Saturday according to the same rhythm—this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the “why” arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement.

This description characterizes Meursault perfectly. The essay collection explained the philosophy of the absurd, and the novel demonstrated the theory.

Meursault’s repetitive life runs smoothly. Then, little by little, Meursault’s happy stasis is pulled apart by the rest of the world’s movement and collapse begins. His mother dies, and with her, a sense of stability he has had his whole life. He becomes involved with Marie, who asks him whether he cares for her and in asking nearly breaches his safe isolation. Raymond insists upon being his friend. Salamano’s dog just disappears, thus disrupting a parallel repetitive rhythm. He shoots a man, and the law demands that he die. Each subtle disruption of Meursault’s desire to be indifferently static brings him to a mental crisis. This crisis is resolved when he comes to understand the utter meaninglessness of his individual life within the mystery of the collective society. The events of his story only make sense that way. Any other explanation leads him to theology—represented by the priest—or fate.
In an expression of Camus’s humanist logic, neither theology nor fate can offer men of intelligence (men like Meursault, willing to use only bare logic to consider the question of life) an explanation for the absolutely senseless things that humans do—war, murder, and other heinous acts. The alternative, therefore, is absurdity. Meursault recognizes the “truth” that life is meaningless. That means life is just what one makes of it while being conscious of two certainties—life and death. In doing so, Camus argues, one would uphold traditional human values because they safeguard one’s life. In other words, human values (what we understand today as “human rights”) lead to the greatest happiness of the greatest number. When one is truly willing to face this Truth, one can be happy. Unfortunately, Meursault is executed before he can live in this fashion.

Absurdism

Camus developed his philosophy that life is absurd: The knowledge that death is inevitable makes life meaningless. This philosophy was developed through his early life of poverty, his illness, and later experiences as a resistance fighter against the Nazis in France.

Absurdism is a philosophy stating that the efforts of humanity to find meaning in the universe will ultimately fail because no such meaning exists (at least in relation to humanity).

Absurdism is related to Existentialism, though should not be confused with it. Absurdism has its roots in the 19th century Danish philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard. The aftermath of World War II provided the social environment that stimulated absurdist views and allowed for their popular development, especially in the devastated country of France.

Absurdity characterizes a world that no longer makes sense to its inhabitants, in which rational decisions are impossible and all action is meaningless and futile.

There is an element of cruelty.

The futility of all human endeavor characterizes many absurdist works. Individuals are powerless to direct their own lives. Characters who choose different paths ultimately experience the same outcomes. This suggests that human effort is meaningless and leads to nothing in the end.

The failure of language to convey meaning is an important theme in the literature of Absurdism. Language is either detached from any interpretation that can be agreed to by all characters, or it is reduced to complete gibberish.

Many absurdist works illustrate the loneliness and isolation of individuals, resulting from the nature of modern life and, in some cases, from the impossibility of effective communication between humans.

Materialism is criticized; even relationships between family members are subject to the terms of profit and loss statements. Meaning ultimately cannot be found in anything outside the self.
Any search for order by men will bring them into direct conflict with this meaningless universe.

**Colonialism**

There are no hints which suggest that the novel takes place in a colonized country. There are, however, hints that racial tensions exist between French-Algerians and “Arabs.” From the first page the reader knows that the novel is set in Algeria and that the date of publication is 1942. Therefore, it can be guessed that the novel occurs in a colonized setting. In addition, the narrator hints at the racial tension by telling the story as if it took place solely among some French people who happened to live in Algeria. Meursault only associates with French-Algerians, and the only people he names are French-Algerians. Then, for no apparent reason, he shoots an Arab.

While it could be argued, and usually is, that the issue of race and colonialism is not an important theme to the novel (because the novel is about the larger concern of absurd individuality), it is still important to note its existence. First, none of the Arabs in the book, including the murder victim, receive a name. In fact, the nurse at the nursing home is given no other attribute aside from having an abscess that requires her to wear bandaging on her face. The reader sees her as marked by this condition, and she is described as an “Arab.” The reader gains little information about her. Another Arab woman is Raymond’s girlfriend. She accuses him of being a pimp, and he beats her. She has no name. In fact, Meursault comments on her name, saying, “[W]hen he told me the woman’s name I realized she was Moorish.” It does not bother him that his “friend” is having relations with an “Arab,” nor does it bother him that Raymond wants to mark her for cheating on him. He wants to cut her nose off in the traditional manner of marking a prostitute. Finally, her brothers and his friends begin to follow Raymond. It is this nameless group of Arabs who Meursault, Masson, and Raymond encounter at the beach. One member of the group is found by Meursault alone and is shot.

The issue of race is the most troubling and unresolved issue of the novel. If one reads the novel solely in terms of the theme of absurdity, the action of the story makes sense—in a meaningless sort of way. However, read in terms of a lesson on human morality and the ethics of the Western tradition wherein a white man goes through a struggle—or agon—in the land of the “Other,” then the story is very contradictory and highly problematic. Meursault certainly does arrive at a “truth,” but that arrival was at the cost of a man’s life as well as a ruined love.

**Free Will**

Though the possession of a free will is taken for granted by most people, the presentation of its “freeness” in *The Stranger* is rather unsettling. Meursault consistently expresses his awareness of his own will as free. In some instances, this might be interpreted as indifference, but Meursault is decidedly, perhaps starkly, free. He does not feel the temptation to encumber his reasoning with considerations or dogmas. For example, he is never worried and is repeatedly doing a systems check on his body—he declares states of hunger, whether he feels well, and that the temperature is good or the
sun is too hot. These are important considerations to Meursault, and they pass the time. Conversely, the magistrate is frustrated, tired, and clings to his belief in God. Meursault discerns that the magistrate finds life’s meaning only through this belief. But when the magistrate asks if Meursault is suggesting he should be without belief, Meursault replies that it has nothing to do with him one way or the other. This is because the only things that should concern Mersault, he decides, are elemental factors, such as keeping his body comfortably cool.

**Narrative**

Psychological self-examinations are common in French first-person narratives, but Camus’s *The Stranger* gave the technique of psychological depth a new twist at the time it was published. Instead of allowing the protagonist to detail a static psychology for the reader, the action and behavior were given to the reader to decipher. Camus did this because he felt that “psychology is action, not thinking about oneself.” The protagonist, along with a failure to explain everything to the reader, refuses to justify himself to other characters. He tells only what he is thinking and perceiving, he does not interrupt with commentary. By narrating the story this way, through the most indifferent person, the reader is also drawn into Meursault’s perspective. The audience feels the absurdity of the events. However, other characters, who do not even have the benefit of hearing the whole of Meursault’s story as the book’s readers do, prefer their ideas of him. They are only too ready to make their judgments at the trial. Moreover, they readily condemn him to death as a heartless killer without regret.

**Structure and Language**

Camus’s narration was immediately recognized as extremely innovative. His language, while recognized as similar to the American “Hemingway style,” was seen as so appropriate to the task as to be hardly borrowed. The style that Camus uses is one of direct speech that does not allow much description. He chose that style because it backed up his narrative technique. The reader is focused on the characters’ reactions and behavior as they are related through Meursault.

Camus also divided the story at the murder. Part one opens with the death of Maman and ends with the murder of the Arab. In part two of the novel, Meursault is in prison and at the end is awaiting his execution. The division reinforces the importance of Meursault in the universe of the story. Normality is jarred throughout the first part until it dissolves into chaos because of the murder. The second half shows the force of law entering to reestablish meaning and therefore bring back order through the death of Meursault. The structure and the language, then, are technically at one with the greater theme of absurdity.

**Setting**
Environment is a very important element to Meursault. He reports the heat of rooms, the way that the sun affects him, and all the other conditions of the habitat he lives in. The story itself is set around the city of Algiers and the beach. It is always daytime and the sun is always out. Curiously, in the universe of The Stranger there is no night, no darkness outside of mental obscurity. Things happen overnight, but no plot action occurs in the dark. The only moment when darkness does threaten is at the start of the vigil, but the caretaker dispels the darkness with the electric light. Other things that happen overnight include private encounters with Marie (we assume) and the verdict, which is read at eight o’clock at night. However, the novel’s events occur during the day, long days that are hardly differentiated from each other. Such facts of time emphasize the absurdity of Meursault; everything is meaningless except for the current state of the body in the environment.

Foreshadowing

This technique is used to indicate a happening before it occurs, and this foretelling can be foreboding. A disturbing moment for Meursault, as well as the unsuspecting reader, occurs while Meursault is sitting near his Maman’s coffin. “It was then that I realized they were all sitting across from me, nodding their heads, grouped around the caretaker. For a second I had the ridiculous feeling that they were there to judge me.” Later, in part two, it is precisely his behavior at this funeral with which the state prosecution is concerned. The way in which Meursault honors his mother has everything to do with his guilt. In other words, the sense of judgement he felt from those sitting across from him at the funeral vigil foreshadowed the solitary condemnation at the trial.

Algeria

Resuming a policy of imperialist expansion after the Napoleonic era, France invaded Algeria in 1830. The French soon controlled the city of Algiers and some coastal areas, but not until 1857 did they subdue the whole region. France sent settlers to colonize the conquered region, but even as late as 1940 the French in Algeria were outnumbered 9 to 1. During World War II the Algerians fought on the side of Germany, which occupied France. However, they were not too keen on resisting the Americans, and when General Eisenhower landed in November of 1942, he met little resistance. That invasion prevented Camus from leaving France and joining his wife in Algeria until the liberation of France in 1944. Throughout the rest of the war, the Algerian independence movement grew due to contact with other Westerners—British and American soldiers.

The independence movement continued to grow after the war but was violently put down by French troops. The struggle escalated when the National Liberation Front (FLN) wrote a new constitution in 1947. Unable to deliver on the promise of the new constitution, the FLN began a war of independence with France in 1954. By 1962, Charles de Gaulle agreed to grant the country independence.

World War II
World War II was in full swing in 1942, since America had declared war on Japan and Germany in response to the Pearl Harbor attack. However, the Allied cause did not look good. France had fallen to the Germans, and British troops were pushed from their holdings in the Pacific to India by the Japanese. On the Russian front, the Germans seemed to be on the verge of capturing Stalingrad when they attacked in February. This attack took the form of a gruesome siege. There was still hope, however, because both the British and the Russians refused to give in. Geography aided the Russians and the superiority of the Royal Air Force made the siege of Britain hazardous.

Summer began and the Allies started to gain against the Axis Powers. American troops were more successful than not in flooding the Allies with needed supplies through their base in Iceland. June brought real progress when the American Navy met the Japanese in the Battle of Midway. This decisive victory ended Japanese expansion in the Pacific and irreparably crippled their naval strength. In November, Eisenhower led a joint British-U.S. force in a landing in Algeria. In Russia, the Germans were still unable to claim victory since the Russian army was refusing to give way. In the end Russia lost 750,000 soldiers throughout the year. The Germans gained against the Russians only to lose all but eighty thousand men, who survived by cannibalism, and surrendered by February of 1943. Slowly the tide was turning against the Germans.

**Albert Camus’ The Stranger**  Reading questions  Name________________________

Date_______________ Period________

The Stranger - Chapters 1 & 2  
**Chapter 1**

1. What does the reference to "a soldier" tell you about the time period of the story?

2. After Meursault arranged for his mother to live in a nursing home, why did he visit her so infrequently?

3. Why was it odd that Madam Meursault desired a religious burial?

4. Does Meursault give an explanation for wanting/not wanting to see the open casket? Why would someone respond in this way? In your opinion, is this normal behavior?

5. Where is the caretaker from? His age?
6. Describe Meursault’s dream-like experience beginning on page 9. What is happening?

7. What is the purpose of holding a vigil? How long does it last?

8. What is Thomas Perez’s relationship with Maman?

9. How do they reach the church? How long does it take? How is the casket transported?

10. What are three (3) of Meursault’s last thoughts of the burial?

Chapter 2

1. Who does Meursault meet the day after his mother is buried?

2. On page 21, what hint is the reader given as to where Meursault lives?

3. What does Meursault choose to do on Sunday? What does this demonstrate about his character/personality?

4. What does Meursault mean when he says, "It occurred to me....really, nothing had changed." (See last sentence on page 24 for clarification).

The Stranger - Chapters 3 - 6

Chapter 3

1. What is your opinion on Meursault’s compulsion to wash his hands?

2. In your opinion, offer an explanation for why Meursault takes a "flying leap" onto a truck with Emmanuel.

3. Who is Salamano? Explain his relationship with his pet. Do you think Salamano cares about its health care?
4. Who is Raymond Sintes? What is "the word around the neighborhood" regarding Raymond?

5. What prompted Raymond’s fight with "the man"?

6. What prompted Raymond to beat his girlfriend "till she bled"?

7. What does Meursault do for Raymond to have Ray say, "Now you’re a pal, Meursault."

Chapter 4

1. What do Meursault and Marie hear coming from Raymond’s room? What is happening?

2. How do you know if Meursault is upset or calm about what just happened?

3. What happens to Salamano’s dog?

4. How does Salamano react?

Chapter 5

1. Where/who does Ray invite to spend Sunday together?

2. What ethnicity is Marie?

3. What opportunity does Meursault’s boss offer?

4. What offer does Marie propose?

5. In your opinion, is Meursault’s behavior normal regarding his job and his girlfriend? Why/why not?

6. What explanation can you offer as to why Meursault follows the woman from Celeste’s?

7. What two places does Salamano check for his missing dog?

8. During a brief discussion between Salamano and Meursault, what new information does Salamano convey about Meursault’s Maman?

9. How has Salamano’s loss brought out his humanitarianism? Give one example.
Chapter 6

1. When leaving for the beach, whom do Ray, Meursault, and Marie see across the street?

2. Who is Masson? How often is he here?

3. When they first arrive at their destination, what do Marie, Meursault, and Masson embark upon?

4. Who do the three men see on the beach?

5. On page 53, what is symbolic about Meursault’s statement, "The blazing sand looked red to me now."

6. What happens to Raymond?

7. On the second trip to the beach, where do the three men find the two Arabs?

8. Do the Arabs seem frightened by the approach? Why/why not?

9. What does Raymond consider doing to the Arabs?

10. Why don’t the Arabs react to this discussion unfolding directly in front of them?

11. On page 57, Meursault returns to the beach by himself. Camus uses symbolism when he states "There was the same dazzling red glare," and "With every blade of light...". In your opinion, what is being inferred?

12. When Meursault encounters the lone Arab, he is once again overcome by the sun’s heat. What event does the heat force him to recall?

13. What occurs to "shatter the harmony" of Meursault’s day?

14. Why does Meursault feel threatened and consequently pull out a gun?

15. On page 59 (last sentence), what is meant by "it was like knocking four quick times on the door of unhappiness." Explain briefly.
The Stranger - Part II

Chapter 1 - Part II

1. What has happened to Meursault?

2. Is he taking his circumstances seriously? Give an example.

3. What question does the attorney feel compelled to ask?

4. What explanation does Meursault give regarding his "nature"?

5. How many times did Meursault fire his revolver?

6. The magistrate becomes frustrated with Meursault. What does he retrieve from his filing cabinet?

7. What's the BIG question the magistrate finally asks Meursault?

8. On p. 70, Meursault says, "I thought about it for a minute and said that more than sorry I felt kind of annoyed." Does Meursault have a conscience? Why or why not?

9. In your opinion, does Meursault feel complemented when referred to as Monsieur Antichrist?

Chapter 2 - Part II

1. Briefly describe Meursault's prison cell. Is this what he had expected?

2. Who is Meursault’s first visitor?

3. Describe Marie's mood during the visit.

4. In a sense, what item was more difficult for Meursault to lose than his freedom?

5. On p. 79, Meursault states that having "a memory" is "an advantage." Briefly explain.

6. The last sentences on p. 81 refer to Meursault’s mother’s funeral and to what nights in prison are like. In your opinion, is there a connection between the two?

Chapter 3 - Part II

1. What is Meursault's first impression of the jury?
2. What clues is the reader given to show that the Algerian court system is different than the U.S. Judicial System?

3. Who are the eight witnesses that will testify at Meursault’s trial?

4. A previous incident occurred between the caretaker and Meursault, which is briefly discussed during the trial. This leads to Camus’ title of the novel. What is the incident?

5. When Celeste, the fourth witness, is called to testify, how does he show support for Meursault?

6. How does the prosecutor attempt to prove that Meursault has no conscience?

7. What is the prosecutor implying when he questions Raymond? (refers to "chance" numerous times.)

8. Explain what Meursault means when he says, "it was back to my cell...sleep of the innocent. (p.97)

Chapter 4 - Part II

1. Does Meursault feel like he has anything to say to defend himself?

2. In your opinion, does Meursault believe that his crime was premeditated?

3. On p. 100, Meursault reveals the key to his character/personality. What is this?

4. What penalty does the prosecutor ask of the jury?

5. Does Meursault have faith that his attorney will convince the jury of his innocence?

6. Imagism is used on p. 104. "left me with the impression.... Was making me dizzy." In your opinion, what is Meursault feeling at this point?

7. Why can’t Meursault return Marie’s smile in the courtroom?

8. What is Meursault’s sentence? In your opinion, is his reaction normal?

Chapter 5 - Part II

1. According to Meursault, why is witnessing an execution so important?

2. What is "the trouble with the guillotine"?

3. What is ironic about this when compared to how Meursault originally got into this predicament?
4. When Meursault’s situation finally "sinks in", what are the two things he always thinks about?

5. What is Meursault's pessimistic view on life and living?

6. Is Meursault a religious person? How do you know?

7. Meursault shows no respect for religion or the priest. Give one example of this.

8. What does the priest mean when he says, "your heart is blind."

9. In the last few paragraphs, how does Meursault finally relate to Maman?

10. Why does Meursault wish that a large crowd of spectators greet him with cries of hate at his execution?

Reading Assignments:

Part I: Complete 1 of the following 6 questions for part one

1. Create a chart that lists, chapter by chapter, major events and settings. And attach separately.
2. Create a reading journal or chart to record Mersault’s emotions (apathy, indifference, guilt, e.g.) in his interactions with other characters in those events and settings. Cite text and page #s.
3. Write a detailed analysis of one of the following passages, paying careful attention to stylistic and thematic development: A. “We got off in the outskirts of Algiers…across the dazzling sea” (49) B. “We walked on the beach…with the low gurgling from the spring and the three notes”(55) C. “But as I got closer…on the door of unhappiness” (57 – 59).
4. Examine Mersault’s references to the passage of time. Chart these.
5. Trace one of the following motifs throughout Part I. Draw conclusions about character and theme as revealed through the motif: light, heat, sound, eyes, sleep, colors, the sky, water, the sun.
6. Revisit the first paragraph of the novel and comment on its significance to Part I.

Part II: Answer each of the following in 2-3 very clear, original sentences. I am looking for your ideas, not a summary of someone else’s analysis.

1. Discuss freedom and imprisonment as paradox.
2. Discuss the novel as a violent satire of justice.

3. Analyze the following passage at the end of the novel: “With him gone… cries of hate” (122-123).

4. Speculate on Mersault’s reaction to the prison chaplain. What does this interaction reveal about Mersault?

5. Speculate on the structure of the novel as a whole, considering carefully the relationship between the two parts as well as shift in narrative techniques.
Literary Background Terms

1. **alliteration** the repetition of initial consonant sounds in two or more words in a line of verse or a sentence of prose, e.g. "Rough and ready." "Gnus never know pneumonia"

2. **ambiguity** The multiple meanings, either intentional or unintentional, of a word, phrase, sentence, or passage.

3. **antithesis** a balancing or contrasting of words or ideas for effect:
4. "Man proposes, God disposes." (Pope)
5. "Fair is foul, and foul is fair." (Shakespeare)
6. "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." (Dickens)
7. **archetype** an image, character, or pattern of circumstances that recurs throughout literature and thought consistently enough to be considered universal.
8. **aside** a dramatic convention by which an actor directly addresses the audience but is not supposed to be heard by the other actors or the stage
9. **assonance** the similarity or repetition of a vowel sound in two or more words. "Lake" and "stake" are rhyming words; "lake" and "fade" are assonant. "Base" and "face" rhyme; "base" and "fade" are assonant
10. **characterization** the method an author uses to reveal or describe characters and their various personalities
11. **Indirect characterization:** what a character thinks, says, feels, does; what others say about the character; the character’s physical description
12. **Direct characterization:** what the author says directly about a character
13. **classicism** a movement or tendency in art, literature, and music reflecting the principles manifested in the art of ancient Greece and, principally, Rome. Classicism emphasizes the traditional and the universal, placing value on reason, clarity, balance, and order. Classicism is traditionally taught in opposition to Romanticism, which is concerned with emotions and personal themes.
14. **cliche** any expression used so often that its freshness and clarity have worn off, e.g., "tip of the iceberg," "to throw a wet blanket."
15. **climax** the high point of conflict and tension preceding the resolution of a drama or story; the point of decision, of inevitability, and of no return
16. **conflict** the problem or struggle in a story that triggers the action. There are several basic types of conflict:
   - **Person vs. Person:** One character has a problem with one or more of the other characters
   - **Person vs. Society:** A character has a problem with some element of society, e.g., school, the law, the accepted way of doing things.
   - **Person vs. Self:** A character has a problem deciding what to do in a particular situation (internal conflict)
   - **Person vs. Nature:** A character has a problem with some natural happening, e.g., the sea, an avalanche, the bitter cold, or any other element of nature
   - **Person vs. Fate or a godlike entity:** A character has to battle what seems to be an uncontrollable problem. Whenever the problem seems to be a
strange or unbelievable coincidence, fate can be considered the cause of the conflict.

- **Person vs. The Supernatural:** A character has to battle an otherworldly entity such as a vampire, a werewolf, or evil personified.

17. **connotation** the implications of a word or phrase, as opposed to its exact meaning (denotation)

18. **consonance** the repetition of consonant sounds within a line of verse or a sentence of prose. Consonance is similar to alliteration except that consonance does not limit the repeated sound to the initial letter of a word, e.g., "such a tide as seems asleep."

19. **couplet** two consecutive lines of verse that have the same end rhyme; also, a two-line stanza

20. **denotation** the dictionary meaning of a word, as opposed to its connotation

21. **denouement** the final solution or outcome (resolution) of a play or story

22. **dramatic monologue** a literary work (or part of a literary work) in which a character is speaking to another person who is silent but identifiable. The speaker's words reveal something important about his or her own character.

23. **empathy** the act of putting yourself in someone else's place and experiencing what that person must feel

24. **epic** a long narrative poem that tells of the deeds and adventures of a hero

25. **exposition** 1) a type of writing that is intended to make clear or to explain something that might otherwise be difficult to understand;

26. (2) in a play or novel, that portion (generally at the beginning) that helps the reader understand the background or situation in which the work is set

27. **farce** literature based on a highly humorous and highly unlikely plot

28. **flashback** returning to an earlier time (in a piece of literature) for the purpose of making something in the present more clear

29. **foil** someone who serves as a contrast or challenge to another character (usually the protagonist)

30. **foot** the smallest repeated pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a poetic line; a unit of meter

   - **Iambic foot:** a two-syllable foot with the stress on the second syllable:
     - a book • of ver • ses un • der neath • the bough,
     - a jug of wine, • a loaf • of bread • and thou.

   - **Trochaic foot:** a two-syllable foot that consists of a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable"
     i. • Dou • ble • dou ble, • toil and • trou • ble,
     • Fi • re • burn and • caul dron • bub • ble

   - **Anapestic foot:** a three-syllable foot that consists of two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed syllable:
     ii. • With the sheep • in the fold • and the cows • in their stalls
     i. • For the moon • ne ver beams • with out bring • ing me dreams • of the beau • ti ful Ann • abel
        • Lee

   - **Dactylic foot:** a three-syllable foot that consists of a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables:
     iii. • Love a gain • song a gain • nest a gain • young a gain
     iv. • This is the • for est prim • e val, the • mur mur ing • pines ...
**Spondaic foot:** a foot that consists of two stressed syllables. Compound words are examples of spondees (heartbreak, childhood, football).*

**Pyrrhic foot:** a foot that consists of two unstressed syllables.*

*Note: Spondees and pyrrhics cannot be used seriously as the only foot in a poem or even in a line of poetry, but poets use them occasionally for variation within poems.

31. **foreshadowing** hints and clues of what is to come later in a story or play
32. **free verse** poetry that has neither a regular meter nor rhyme scheme
33. **genre** a category or type of literature based on its style, form, and content.
   The mystery novel is a literary genre. Poetry, or romantic poetry.
34. **hubris** from the Greek word *hubris*, meaning "excessive pride." In Greek tragedy, hubris is often viewed as the flaw that leads to the downfall of the tragic hero.
35. **hyperbole** an exaggeration for the sake of emphasis that is not to be taken literally, e.g., starving to death, rivers of blood, as old as time, a million times a day)
36. **imagery** The sensory details of a work - the "word-pictures", "sound effects", tactile, kinesthetic, or other sensory responses evoked in the reader to describe, arouse emotion or represent abstractions. On a physical level, Imagery uses terms related to the five senses; we refer to visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory, or olfactory imagery.
37. **inference / infer** To draw a reasonable conclusion from the information presented
38. **irony** A figure of speech in which speaker's (author's) intent and actual meaning differ - a pattern of words that turns away from direct statement of its own obvious meaning; the contrast between what is stated explicitly and what is really meant; the difference between what appears to be and what actually is true. In general, there are three major types of irony used in language: (1) In verbal irony, the words literally state the opposite of the writer's (or speaker's) true meaning. (2) In situational irony, events turn out the opposite of what was expected. What the characters and readers think ought to happen is not what does happen. (3) In dramatic irony, facts or events are unknown to a character in a play or piece of fiction but known to the reader, audience, or other characters in the work. Irony is used for many reasons, but frequently, it's used to create poignancy or humor.

1. **monologue** any speech or narrative presented wholly by one person to others who do not interrupt
2. **mood** atmosphere created by the writer; the emotional response felt by the reader. See tone.
3. **moral** the particular value or lesson the author is trying to get across to the reader
4. **motif** recurring images, words, objects, phrases, or actions that tend to unify a work of literature
5. **myth** a traditional story that attempts to explain a natural phenomenon or to justify a certain practice or belief of a society
6. **narration** writing or speaking that relates an event or a series of events; a story
7. **narrative poetry** nondramatic poetry that tells a story or presents a narrative
8. **epic** a long poem that relates the great deeds of a hero who embodies the values of a particular society
9. naturalism an extreme form of realism in which the author tries to show the relation of a person to the environment or surroundings.
10. oxymoron a combination of contradictory terms (jumbo shrimp, the living dead, cold fire, feather of lead)
11. parable a short, descriptive story designed to suggest a principle, illustrate a moral, or answer a question; allegorical stories
12. parallelism a similar grammatical structure within a sentence or within a paragraph
13. parody a composition imitating another, usually serious, piece of work. It is designed to ridicule in humorous fashion an original piece of work or its author.
14. pathos the quality in art and literature that stimulates pity, tenderness, or sorrow in the reader
15. persona from the Greek word for mask, it is the narrator or speaker of story or poem
16. personification giving human characteristics to inanimate objects, ideas, abstractions, or animals
17. protagonist the main character of the story; the character who is changed or who grows or learns as a result of the conflict.
18. realism literature that attempts to represent life as it really is
19. rhetorical question a question asked for its rhetorical effect which neither requires a reply nor intends to induce a reply
20. romance a form of literature that presents life as we would like it to be rather than as it actually is. Usually romance has a great deal of adventure, love, and excitement.
21. romanticism a literary movement with an emphasis on the imagination and emotions
22. soliloquy a speech in which a character who is alone speaks his or her thoughts aloud
23. stereotype a character representing generalized racial or social traits, repeated as typical from work to work with no individualizing traits; his or her nature is immediately familiar to the reader (the mad scientist, the talkative cab driver, the temperament movie star)
24. stock character a conventional character type belonging by custom to given forms of literature: the vengeance-seeking hero and scheming villain in tragedy; the cruel stepmother and prince charming in fairy tales; the irate police captain and resourceful detective in detective stories.
25. stream of consciousness a style of writing that attempts to imitate the natural flow of a character’s thoughts, feelings, reflections, memories, and mental images as the character experiences them.
26. theme the main idea about life that the author intends the reader to extract from the work; a general statement about the human condition. It is always a predication - a complete sentence. It is also called theme statement.
27. thesis or thesis statement a sentence that serves as the plan of the groundwork for an essay by specifying the points the writer is going to use to discuss the topic. It may be thought of as a map of the essay.
28. verisimilitude the semblance of truth; a characteristic whereby the setting, circumstances, characters, actions, and outcomes in a work are designed to seem true, lifelike, real, plausible, and probable.
29. **voice** in literature: a language style adopted by an author to create the effect of a particular speaker. The voice of a literary piece can be the author or a character (person, animal, or thing) created by the author. Especially in poetry, readers should not always assume that the voice is that of the poet. Identifying the voice is a key to understanding the meaning of the piece.

**in writing:** the personality and distinct way of “talking on paper” that allow a reader to “hear” a human personality in a piece of writing. Writers’ true voices in their writing make it different from that of anyone else. Voice is the individual “sound” of one’s writing, closely interwoven with other elements of style.
Select the letter of the literary term for each definition or example below:

- **20.** The repetition of the first consonant sound in words is:
  - A. Hyperbole
  - B. Personification
  - C. Alliteration
  - D. Simile

- **21.** The repetition of vowel sounds in the middle of words.
  - A. Assonance
  - B. Alliteration
  - C. Hyperbole
  - D. Onomatopoeia

- **22.** Using descriptions to engage the five senses of the reader is:
  - A. Personification
  - B. Imagery
  - C. Metaphor
  - D. Simile

- **23.** Comparing two different things using the words like or as:
  - A. Simile
  - B. Metaphor
  - C. Personification
  - D. Onomatopoeia

- **24.** A direct comparison between two objects; does NOT include like or as:
  - A. Simile
  - B. Metaphor
  - C. Personification
  - D. Onomatopoeia

- **25.** Giving human traits to non-living things:
  - A. Hyperbole
  - B. Alliteration
  - C. Assonance
  - D. Personification

- **26.** Using words that imitate the sounds associated with the objects or actions they refer to:
  - A. Alliteration
  - B. Assonance
  - C. Onomatopoeia
  - D. Simile

- **27.** Obvious and intentional exaggeration
  - A. Hyperbole
  - B. Metaphor
  - C. Alliteration
28. I had to wait in line forever for those tickets!
   - A. Simile
   - B. Metaphor
   - C. Assonance
   - D. Hyperbole

29. We need to weed the leafy garden.
   - A. Simile
   - B. Onomatopoeia
   - C. Assonance
   - D. Personification

30. Crocodiles’ teeth are sharp daggers, so be careful.
   - A. Simile
   - B. Metaphor
   - C. Personification
   - D. Assonance

31. Bumbling Bob blew a chance at batting baseballs with Braves’ players.
   - A. Assonance
   - B. Imagery
   - C. Hyperbole
   - D. Alliteration

32. The baby's skin is as smooth as silk.
   - A. Simile
   - B. Metaphor
   - C. Personification
   - D. Hyperbole

33. I tasted the sour on my tongue and felt it in the back of my mouth. Then before I reached the door, the sting was burning down my legs and into my Sunday socks.
   - A. Simile
   - B. Metaphor
   - C. Imagery
   - D. Personification

34. The wilted flowers begged for water.
   - A. Simile
   - B. Personification
   - C. Metaphor
   - D. Imagery

35. I listened as my sister threw a huge rock into the river, and it went kerplunk!
   - A. Simile
   - B. Onomatopoeia
   - C. Hyperbole
   - D. Assonance
19 Matching questions

1. □ plot
2. □ foreshadowing
3. □ mood
4. □ hyperbole
5. □ satire
6. □ onomatopoeia
7. □ characterization
8. □ irony
9. □ imagery
10. □ theme
11. □ rhyme
12. □ tone
13. □ setting
14. □ point of view
15. □ personification
16. □ metaphor
17. □ simile
18. □ figurative language
19. □ alliteration

1. □ a The main idea or meaning of a text. Often, this is an insight about human life revealed in a literary work.
2. □ b words that sound like what they mean
3. □ e repetition of initial consonant sounds
4. □ d atmosphere; feeling created in the reader by a literary work or passage
5. □ e repetition of sounds at the end of words
6. □ f a word or group of words in a literary work which appeal to one or more of the senses: sight, taste, touch, hearing, and smell
7. □ g when reality is different from appearance; the implied meaning of a statement is the opposite of its literal or obvious meaning
8. □ h A figure of speech comparing to unlike things without using like or as
9. □ i writing or speech not meant to be interpreted literally
10. □ j where and when the story takes place
11. □ k the perspective from which the writer tells the story (1st, 2nd, 3rd person; omniscient, limited omniscient)
12. □ l comparison using "like" or "as"
13. □ m an extreme exaggeration
14. □ n the sequence of events in a story
15. □ o the author's attitude toward the subject
16. □ p the use of hints and clues to suggest what will happen later in a plot
17. □ q writing which ridicules society, a group, a social institution, etc., in order to reveal a weakness, A type of writing that ridicules the shortcomings of people or institutions in an attempt to bring about a change.
18. □ r the process by which the writer reveals the personality of a character
19. □ s A figure of speech in which an object or animal is given human feelings, thoughts, or attitudes