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In *The Stranger*, Albert Camus portrays Meursault, the book's narrator and main character, as aloof, detached, and unemotional. He does not think much about events or their consequences, nor does he express much feeling in relationships or during emotional times.

He displays an impassiveness throughout the book in his reactions to the people and events described in the book. After his mother's death he sheds no tears; seems to show no emotions. He displays limited feelings for his girlfriend, Marie Cardona, and shows no remorse at all for killing an Arab. His reactions to life and to people distances him from his emotions, positive or negative, and from intimate relationships with others, thus he is called by the book's title, "the stranger". While this behavior can be seen as a negative trait, there is a young woman who seems to want to have a relationship with Meursault and a neighbor who wants friendship. He seems content to be indifferent, possibly protected from pain by his indifference.

Meursault rarely shows any feeling when in situations which would, for most people, elicit strong emotions. Throughout the vigil, watching over his mother's dead body, and at her funeral, he never cries. He is, further, depicted enjoying a cup of coffee with milk during the vigil, and having a smoke with a caretaker at the nursing home in which his mother died. The following day, after his mother's funeral, he goes to the beach and meets a former colleague named Marie Cardona. They swim, go to a movie, and then spend the night together. Later in their relationship, Marie asks Meursault if he wants to marry her. He responds that it doesn't matter to him, and if she wants to get married, he would agree. She then asks him if he loves her. To that question he responds that he probably doesn't, and explains that marriage really isn't such a serious thing and doesn't require love. This reaction is fairly typical of Meursault as portrayed in the book. He appears to be casual and indifferent about life events. Nothing seems to be very significant to him. Later on in the book, after he kills an Arab, not once does he show any remorse or guilt for what he did. Did he really feel nothing? Camus seems to indicate that Meursault is almost oblivious and totally unruffled and untouched by events and people around him. He is unwilling to lie, during his trial, about killing the Arab. His reluctance to get involved in defending himself results in a verdict of death by guillotine. Had Meursault been engaged in his defense, explaining his actions, he might have been set free.

Meursault's unresponsive behavior, distant from any apparent emotions, is probably reinforced by the despair which he sees open and feeling individuals experience. He observes, for example, Raymond cheated on and hurt by a girlfriend, and sees his other neighbor, Salamano, very depressed when he loses a dear companion, his dog. Meursault's responses are very different, he doesn't get depressed at death nor does he get emotionally involved. He appears to be totally apathetic. Thus, he seems to feel no pain and is protected from life's disappointments.

Sometimes a person like Meursault can be appealing to others because he is so non-judgmental and uncritical, probably a result of indifference rather than sympathetic feelings. His limited

involvement might attract some people because an end result of his distance is a sort of acceptance of others, thus he is not a threat to their egos. Raymond Sintes, a neighbor who is a pimp, seems to feel comfortable with Meursault. Sintes does not have to justify himself because Meursault doesn't comment on how Sintes makes money or how he chooses to live his life. Even though Meursault shows no strong emotions or deep affection, Marie, his girlfriend, is still attracted and interested in him. She is aware of, possibly even fascinated by, his indifference. Despite the seemingly negative qualities of this unemotional man, people nevertheless seem to care for him.

There are individuals who, because of different or strange behavior, might be outcasts of society, but find, in spite of or because of their unconventional behavior, that there are some people who want to be a part of their lives. Meursault, an asocial person is such an individual. His behavior, while not antagonistic or truly antisocial, is distant, yet it does not get in the way of certain relationships. While there are some people who might find such relationships unsatisfying and limited, Meursault and those he is connected to seem to be content with their "friendships". His aloofness, though, may not have saved him from suffering. It might actually have been the cause of the guilty verdict at his trial for killing the Arab. Withdrawing from involvement with people or life events might not mean total isolation or rejection but it does not necessarily protect an individual from pain or a bad end.

