**Meursault Character Analysis: Who is this guy?**

**lacking nonchalant resistance introspection passively jaded  
detached misunderstood dispassionate epiphany absurdist lust**The protagonist-narrator of his \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_adventures, Meursault is a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and deathly honest man who refuses to lie about himself to save his life; a simple man, whose moods are painfully dictated by the powers of Nature; and an independent man, one who will not accept God, or any of society’s formulas for happiness.   
  
Can we easily identify with Meursault? We’re not sure. Young and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ambition, he is employed by a shipping company in Algiers, but is not interested in exploring opportunities for growth. It could be that he is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and not particularly dutiful – he sends his mother to a convalescent home away in the country without the semblance of guilt. Perhaps he is lustful, yet emotionally detached – he is fine marrying or not marrying, and doesn’t see a difference between being in love and being in\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. But even if such a\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, uninterested nihilist is hard to identify with, you’d better think again before you label him as a loser.  
  
It also could be that Meursault is simply\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Far from insensitive, he is attentive to the smallest details. Far from nonchalant, he adamantly refuses to believe in life after death, to seek God out to escape execution, to mask his calmness about or acceptance of death. But even if you think this latter interpretation is true, Meursault didn’t start out that way in the text. Which brings us to… **Meursault’s Evolution**

At first, it’s actually pretty hard to see any change in Meursault. He starts off uninterested in life, and he ends up…uninterested in life. What gives? Actually, there are some difficult to distinguish changes underneath the surface.  
  
We’re going to break down Meursault’s grand evolution into four pieces. First, check out the way Meursault makes decisions at the beginning of the book. Oh, wait, he doesn’t make decisions at all. If he’s happy, it’s because he is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_so. If he’s "annoyed," he is passively annoyed. Meursault can’t even commit actions on his own. Marriage, no marriage, who cares? As he has told us time and time again, it’s all the same, either way. After all, he doesn’t even shoot the Arab, right? According to his narration, "the trigger gave." Now, there is an interesting and incredibly important line, before the murder, when Meursault says, "It was then that I realized that you could either shoot or not shoot." He comprehends the existence of a choice – but only for a brief moment.   
  
For number two, notice how \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Meursault is in anything – at least at first. He simply doesn’t care. "Annoyed" is the closest he ever gets to angry, a simple "happy" (which comes across as meaning "content") the nearest he comes to joy. This guy is one cold fish.  
  
Number three is Meursault’s lack of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and self-knowledge at the beginning of the novel: he’s clueless. He doesn’t know himself. The caretaker asks why he doesn’t want to see his mother’s body, and his response is, "I don’t know." He’s not aware of his surroundings, sure, but more importantly, he’s not aware of his own motivations.  
  
Moving quickly along to number four in our breakdown, look at how Meursault views people at the beginning of his narration. He either wants nothing to do with them (remember how he tries to avoid conversation with the man on the bus?), or he falls casually into supposed "friendships" (like with Raymond). Either way, he’s more interested in the path of least \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_than any sort of connection. But more importantly is the way that Meursault can’t understand people. He observes them carefully, he says, "not one detail of their faces or clothes escape" him, but it is still "hard for [him] to believe they really exist." He does follow that strange woman from Celeste’s diner, but only because "[he doesn’t] have anything to do." He also "[forgets] about her a few minutes later."  
  
So there’s your four: when things start out, Meursault is passive, dispassionate, ignorant of himself, and unable to connect with or even acknowledge other people. All of these change throughout the ordeal that Meursault suffers. What’s most interesting is that he is on trial – he is being questioned, forced to think, forced to consider himself. Although his "revelation" comes at "dawn" while he’s alone in his cell, it is clear that the process was a gradual one and that, in order to get to this\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, he had to run the gauntlet, so to speak.

http://shmoop.com/the-stranger/meursault.html