

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

“The Stranger” Study Guide for Test

Part I Reading Comprehension - Fill in the Blanks

Part One begins with someone being notified of his mother's death. At her _____ he expresses none of the expected emotions of _____. When asked if he wishes to view the body, he says no, and, instead, _____ and drinks coffee with milk in front of the coffin. Rather than expressing his feelings, he only comments to the reader about the others at the funeral. He later encounters _____, a former employee of his firm, and the two become re-acquainted and begin to have a sexual relationship, regardless of the fact that _____ mother died just a day before. In the next few days, he helps his friend and neighbor, _____ take revenge on a _____ girlfriend suspected of infidelity. For the neighbor, he agrees to write a letter to his girlfriend, with the sole purpose of inviting her over so that his neighbor can have sex with her but kick her out at the last minute as emotional _____. He sees no reason not to help him, and it pleases his neighbor. He does not express concern that the neighbor's girlfriend is going to be emotionally hurt, as he believes the neighbor's story that she has been unfaithful, and he himself is both somewhat drunk and characteristically unfazed by any feelings of empathy. In general he considers other people either interesting or annoying.

The letter works: the girlfriend returns, but the situation escalates when she slaps the neighbor after he tries to kick her out, and the neighbor _____ her. The neighbor is taken to court where the main character testifies that she had been unfaithful, and the neighbor is let off with a warning. After this, the girlfriend's brother and several _____ friends begin tailing the neighbor. The neighbor invites the main character and his girlfriend to a friend's _____ house for the weekend, and when there, they encounter the spurned neighbor's girlfriend's brother and a friend; these two confront the neighbor and wound him with a _____ during a fist fight. Later, walking back along the beach alone and now armed with a _____ he took from the neighbor so that the neighbor would not do anything rash, the main character encounters the brother. He is now disoriented on the edge of _____ and when the brother flashes his knife at him, the main character kills him.. Despite killing the man with the first attempt, he shoots the corpse _____ more times after a brief pause. He does not divulge to the reader any specific reason for his crime or emotions he experiences at the time, if any, aside from the fact that he was bothered by the heat and bright _____.

Part Two begins with the main character's incarceration, explaining his arrest, time in prison, and upcoming trial. His general detachment makes living in prison very tolerable, especially after he gets used to the idea of not being able to go places whenever he wants to and no longer being able to satisfy his _____ desires with his girl friend. He passes the time _____, or mentally listing the objects he owned back in his apartment building. At the trial, the main character's quietness and passivity is seen as demonstrative of his seeming lack of remorse or guilt by the _____ attorney, and so the attorney concentrates more upon the main character's inability or unwillingness to _____ at his mother's funeral than on the actual murder. The attorney pushes the main character to tell the truth but never comes through and later, on his own, he explains to the reader that he simply was never really able to feel any remorse or personal emotions for any of his actions in life. The dramatic prosecutor theatrically denounces the main character to the point that he claims he must be a soulless _____, incapable of remorse and that he thus deserves to die for his crime. Although the main character's attorney defends him and later tells the main character that he expects the sentence to be light, the main character is alarmed when the _____ informs him of the final decision: that he will be decapitated publicly.

Existentialism is the philosophical and cultural movement which holds that the starting point of philosophical thinking must be the experiences of the individual. Moral and scientific thinking together do not suffice to understand human existence, so a further set of categories, governed by a norm of "authenticity", is necessary to understand human existence. ("Authenticity", in the context of existentialism, is being true to one's own personality, spirit or character.) Existentialism began in the mid-19th century as a reaction against the then-dominant systematic philosophies, such as those developed by Hegel and Kant. Søren Kierkegaard, generally considered to be the first existentialist philosopher, posited that it is the individual who is solely responsible for giving meaning to life and for living life passionately and sincerely ("authentically"). Existentialism became popular in the years following World War II and influenced a range of disciplines besides philosophy, including theology, drama, art, literature and psychology. Existentialists generally regard traditional systematic or academic philosophies, in both style and content, as too abstract and remote from concrete human experience. Scholars generally consider the views of existentialist philosophers to be profoundly different from one another relative to those of other philosophies. Criticisms of existentialist philosophers include the assertions that they confuse their use of terminology and contradict themselves.

The theme of authentic existence is common to many existentialist thinkers. It is often taken to mean that one has to "find oneself" and then live in accordance with this self.

What is meant by authenticity is that in acting, one should act as oneself, not as *One* acts or as *one's genes* or any other essence requires. The authentic act is one that is in accordance with one's freedom. Of course, as a condition of freedom is facticity, this includes one's facticity, but not to the degree that this facticity can in any way *determine* one's choices (in the sense that one could then blame one's background for making the choice one made). The role of facticity in relation to authenticity involves letting one's actual values come into play when one makes a choice (instead of, like Kierkegaard's Aesthete, "choosing" randomly), so that one also takes responsibility for the act instead of choosing either-or without allowing the options to have different values.

In contrast to this, the inauthentic is the denial to live in accordance with one's freedom. This can take many forms, from pretending choices are meaningless or random, through convincing oneself that some form of determinism is true, to a sort of "mimicry" where one acts as "*One* should." How "*One*" should act is often determined by an image one has of how one such as oneself (say, a bank manager, lion tamer, prostitute, etc.) acts. This image usually corresponds to some sort of social norm, but this does not mean that all acting in accordance with social norms is inauthentic: The main point is the attitude one takes to one's own freedom and responsibility, and the extent to which one acts in accordance with this freedom.

Literature

Existentialist perspectives are also found in literature to varying degrees. Jean-Paul Sartre's 1938 novel *Nausea*^[64] was "steeped in Existential ideas", and is considered an accessible way of grasping his philosophical stance.^[65] Since 1970, much cultural activity in art, cinema, and literature contains postmodernist and existentialist elements. Books such as *The Stranger* by Albert Camus, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) (now republished as *Blade Runner*) by Philip K. Dick and *Fight Club* by Chuck Palahniuk all distort the line between reality and appearance while simultaneously espousing strong existentialist themes. Ideas from such thinkers as Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Michel Foucault, Franz Kafka, Friedrich Nietzsche, Herbert Marcuse, Gilles Deleuze, and Eduard von Hartmann permeate the works of artists such as Chuck Palahniuk, David Lynch, Crispin Glover, and Charles Bukowski, and one often finds in their works a delicate balance between distastefulness and beauty.