

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

I choose the first novel written by Albert Camus, The Stranger, because I like how the author portrays the character with his unique personalities and attitudes that are different from common people. Camus is particularly considered the originator of absurdism, a philosophy related to Existentialism. Absurdism contends that human beings are basically irrational and human suffering is the result of vain attempts by individuals to find reason or meaning in the absurd abyss of existence. “Camus claimed that the only true philosophical question was that of suicide. That is, should we bother living at all or simply kill ourselves? Camus argued that historically most people have either believed that life is meaningless and concluded in favor of suicide, or has created some artificial meaning like religion to fill their lives. Camus claims that there is a third option: we can realize that life is meaningless and nevertheless keep living” (Bykova).

I choose The Stranger, which is one of his masterpiece (another one is The Fall), because I am interested in how Camus explores the basic ideas of his theory of absurdism; namely, that the world is essentially meaningless and the only way to arrive at any meaning or purpose is to living in it or committed suicide. Thus it

is the individual and not the act that gives meaning to any given context. In this book, he wants to explore what he termed “the nakedness of man faced with the absurd” (Camus). Nakedness means something that is not hidden or made less clear; plain to see and perhaps shocking. From his term, one can see people who live in their own world without any way to find the meaning in life and reason in the irrational and meaningless world.

I want to analyze the theme of this novel. Theme is “its controlling idea or its central insight. It is the unifying generalization about life stated or implied by the story. To derive the theme of the story, we must ask what its central purpose is: what view of life it supports or what insight into life it reveals” (Perrine 105). I choose theme in order to connect the meaning of the story and absurdism itself.

There are a lot of theories related to absurdism and how people try to live in it. I find one of the theories which says that:

Absurdism is a philosophy stating that the efforts of humanity to find meaning in the universe will ultimately fail (and, hence, are absurd) because no such meaning exists, at least in relation to humanity. Absurdism pertains that, although such meaning may exist, the pursuit of it is not essential. It is distinguished from nihilism by its subjective view of humanity, theology and meaning. It is best to think of it as the ‘agnostic’ stage between existentialism and nihilism.

Søren Kierkegaard wrote extensively on absurdism in the mid 19th century, but the philosophy is most associated with Albert Camus and his novels The Stranger and The Myth of Sisyphus (Top 10 School of Philosophy).

The term of absurd means “unreasonable; nonsensical; ridiculous, preposterous; silly, foolish” (Dictionary & Translations by Babylon).

Most of the people in this world still do not know about the purpose of life and searching the truth of life which is still a mystery. Basically, people live in the unreasonable world and by this reality. It forces them to find the purpose and meaning in this life. The meaning of absurdism itself, “irrationality; philosophy based on belief that the universe is irrational and meaningless” (Dictionary & Translations by Babylon).

Camus also said that, “Absurd is the confrontation between the sense of the irrational and the overwhelming desire for clarity which resounds in the depths of man. The absurd is a pointless quest for meaning in a universe devoid of meaning. It defines the beginning of the questioning of existence. Coming to terms with the Absurd is Camus’s main concern” (Dance of the Mind). Camus also quoted about finding happiness and meaning in this meaningless world: *“You will never be happy if you continue to search for what happiness consists of. You will never live if you are looking for the meaning of life”* (Top 10 Schools of Philosophy – The LIST Universe).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1. What is the theme of absurdism of the novel?
2. How does the protagonist help reveal the theme of absurdism?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1. To know the theme of absurdism of the novel.
2. To show how the protagonist help reveal the theme of absurdism.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

The approach that I used is Philosophical Approach, focusing on Absurdism. This theory explains about the absence of values in character's life.

I read The Stranger, a novel by Albert Camus. I did library research and also browsing many internet sites related to the book and the author. I quoted some of the text and quotations to my thesis. Then I analyzed the novel and conclude my analysis.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis divides into three chapters. The first chapter is Introduction, which includes Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and The Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the Analysis on The Stranger. Chapter Three is the Conclusion. The thesis ends with lists of references in the Bibliography and Appendices, which contain Synopsis of a novel, The Stranger and Biography of the Author, Albert Camus.