***The Plague***

**Albert Camus**

**Study Guide and**

**Literary Analysis Packet**

**Activity 1: Considering Context**

Understanding context of a work is critical to a thorough understanding of its style, tone, themes and symbols. In the space below, record your knowledge and understanding of the background for *The Plague*. Be sure to go back and add to your notes as we progress through the book, especially after the interactive oral presentations.

***The Plague***

Author and Background:

Important Dates:

Key Philosophical Ideas:

Country and language of original publication:

Explain what you know about this text, time period, language, geographic region, political situation or other historical events that may be relevant in your reading.

**Activity 2: Quote Bank**

You will need detailed and persuasive references to the text in order to write your Works in Translation paper. This activity will help you compile a bank of meaningful quotes on which you can draw for your paper.

* Choose a direct reference from a character in the text.
* Comment on the relevance of the reference—what it tells us about the character
* Finally, comment on the connection between these references in terms of their significance to the work as a whole.

**Character 1:**

Quote/Reference 1:

Significance:

Quote/Reference 2:

Significance:

Quote/Reference 3:

Significance:

**What is the connection between these quotes?**

**Character 2:**

Quote/Reference 1:

Significance:

Quote/Reference 2:

Significance:

Quote/Reference 3:

Significance:

**What is the connection between these quotes?**

**Activity 3: Quote Builder**

Break into pairs. Each person presents a short quote from the text to his or her partner. After hearing the quote, your partner must provide:

* Which character the quote is from
* The context in which it appeared in the text
* The significance of the quote for the overall text

The first two have definite answers. The last will be dependent on the individual interpretation.

**Quote Builder Round 1:**

Your Quote (write it here so you can read it to your partner)

Character:

Context:

Significance:

Your Partner’s Quote (make notes as you listen)

Character:

Context:

Significance:

**Quote Builder Round 2:**

Your Quote (write it here so you can read it to your partner)

Character:

Context:

Significance:

Your Partner’s Quote (make notes as you listen)

Character:

Context:

Significance:

**Activity 4: Literary Feature Analysis**

In literature, features of the author’s language such as diction, imagery, figurative language stand out and help define the author’s style. This activity helps you analyze the literary features of the text with a more critical eye. You will need to examine the role the author’s use of these features plays in the overall effectiveness of the text. Basically, you are trying to uncover WHY the author uses certain literary features, and HOW they affect the reader.

* Copy or paste a passage from your text into the space below.
* Identify a **literary feature** and comment on this feature in the spaces on the next page.

*Copy a short passage from your text here*

**Literary Feature 1**

Describe a literary feature that you can see in the passage you selected.

Provide specific examples from the text.

Describe the effect this literary feature has on the reader.

Outline the connection of this literary feature to others in the text.

**Literary Feature 2**

Describe a literary feature that you can see in the passage you selected.

Provide specific examples from the text.

Describe the effect this literary feature has on the reader.

Outline the connection of this literary feature to others in the text.

**Literary Feature 3**

Describe a literary feature that you can see in the passage you selected.

Provide specific examples from the text.

Describe the effect this literary feature has on the reader.

Outline the connection of this literary feature to others in the text.

**Literary Feature 4**

Describe a literary feature that you can see in the passage you selected.

Provide specific examples from the text.

Describe the effect this literary feature has on the reader.

Outline the connection of this literary feature to others in the text.

**Activity 5: Shared Reading Response**

Talking about your reading with others can help you make meaningful connections between events/themes in this text, and with other works we have studied.

* In small groups, you will take turns speaking about a self-selected section of the text (generally the reading from the prior 2 days).
* The listeners are required to ask questions as they go along using certain prompts.
* Both the listeners and speakers need to make note of any questions asked at the end of the activity.

As the listener, you must ask questions related to the following prompts:

* What is the speaker’s knowledge of the content (comprehension of author’s purpose, understanding of key ideas/events, etc)
* How the parts of the work relate to the work as a whole and to other works we have studied
* How the literary features (author’s style) affect the reader’s response
* How the selection reflects themes, symbols, or key ideas in the work

**Listeners must also help the speaker stay focused and to support their ideas with specific references from the work.** Your questioning will help you do this. The speaker needs to use accurate, clear and precise language. By seeking clarification of points, you can help the speaker do this.

Record your shared reading responses on the next page.

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| **Speaker’s knowledge of content** |
| **How parts of the work relate to the work as a whole or other works?** |
| **What effects do the literary features have on the reader’s response?** |
| **What key themes, big ideas or symbols are reflected in the selection?** |
| **Other questions** |

**Activity 6: Connecting Theme and Literary Features in a Text**

This exercise helps you to acquire in-depth knowledge of and insight into the text’s purposeful structure, key ideas and literary features.

* Identify an idea or theme expressed through the text.
* Select up to three literary features that appear in the work that somehow support or are related to the theme. Highlight those literary features from the given list.
* Explain how the chosen literary feature supports this idea or theme.
* Make connections between the literary features in terms of how they support each other in the text.

**Theme/Ideas expressed through the text:**

**Sample literary features:**

Allegory, Alliteration, Allusion, Antagonist, Atmosphere, Characterization, Climax, Dialogue, Diction, Euphemism, Flashback, Foreshadowing, Hyperbole, Imagery, Irony, Metaphor, Mood, Motif, Myth, Narration, Paradox, Plot, Point of view, Protagonist, Repetition, Satire, Setting, Simile, Structure, Style, Symbol, Syntax, Theme, Tone

**Literary Feature 1**

Provide specific examples from the text.

Describe the effect of this literary feature has on the reader/audience.

Outline connections of this literary feature to other literary features in the work.

How does the literary feature support the theme or big ideas in the work?

**Literary Feature 2**

Provide specific examples from the text.

Describe the effect of this literary feature has on the reader/audience.

Outline connections of this literary feature to other literary features in the work.

How does the literary feature support the theme or big ideas in the work?

**The Plague Study Questions**

1. In the first chapter of the novel, the narrator describes the town of Oran and its people. What are his main criticisms of Oran’s citizens? How does the epidemic change their attitudes?
2. Fully describe Tarrou, Grand, and Rambert and explain Rieux’s relationships with each of them. What do his friendships with these men reveal about Rieux as a person?
3. As a philosopher, Camus is associated with the concept of the absurd hero, that is, someone who persists in meaningless, ludicrous, or irrational behavior. Where do we see this sort of absurdity in *The Plague*? What are we to make of it?
4. How do the actions of Tarrou and Rieux prove that they live by their asserted moral codes?

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1. Why does Rieux say that Grand is the “hero” (137) of The Plague?
2. How does Camus use suspense (uncertainty of outcome) in the book? What effect does this have on readers?
3. Why does Camus place so much emphasis on separation or exile as principal horrors of the plague that strikes Oran?
4. n what ways does The Plague present an unrealistic account a modern city facing pestilence? Does Camus gain something by not giving an accurate portrayal of a city in quarantine?
5. What are the major choices facing the book’s characters such as Tarrou, Rampert, and Father Paneloux? What do they decide and how do they make their decisions?
6. Describe some of the novel’s conflicts (character conflicts, ideology, man vs. environment, etc).
7. Describe Father Paneloux’s sermons? How does he use religion to explain the plague?
8. Analyze Camus’ treatment of suffering, death, and God in *The Plague*. What does he imply about religion?
9. Examine the theme of solidarity and resistance in the novel. How does this reflect on the book’s wider allegorical context?
10. Tarrou wonders “Can one be a saint without God?” (255). What answer do you think Camus would make to this question?
11. Do any of the characters experience lasting change as a result of their experiences with the plague?
12. The Plague ends with a suggestion that the story will begin again someday with another plague. Why does Camus end the book this way?
13. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of making Rieux the narrator of *The Plague.*