

In addition to these questions, I'll send a set of quotations for Part II.

To begin, consider that Oran's citizens communicated with loved ones outside the city by telegram (if at all); those telegrams were limited to 10 words. Compose two or three 10-word telegrams to those you love most—it's an important exercise. Write here:

1.

2.

3.

Questions

When we think of separation, of exile, we think not only of exile from others, but also of exile from God (e.g., souls in *The Inferno* and fallen angels in the lake of fire in *Paradise Lost*). Do any of Oran's citizens seem exiled from God? How can we tell?

Notice the reliance on 10-word telegrams. What does that say about the difficulty of expression? (See paragraphs on pp. 62-63.). How important is language, living language, to expressing love, fear, faith, hope? Can we express such essentials without language? While we in EVV are in quarantine, to whom do we feel an urgency to communicate? Why?

Memory: "they came to know the incorrigible sorrow of all prisoners and exiles, which is to live in company with a memory that serves no purpose" (p. 66). In life, what are the functions of memory? What is the relationship of memory to sin, repentance, forgiveness? What is the relationship of memory to love, faith, hope?

"Thus each of us had to be content to live only for the day, alone under the vast indifference of the sky" (p. 68). Although the New Testament urges us to live only for the day, do we? Can we? Why are we bound to the past and future? If we knew we could live only today, perhaps tomorrow—then die, would we be able to do so live for today alone? To be free of concerns for past and future? How might that change our attitudes towards those we love? Those we despise? Ourselves? God?

Oran is a city of about 200,000, not so different from EVV. What happens during Oran's plague that differs from ours? What about business openings and closings? Drinking? Crime? A Week of Prayer?

On p. 75 Grand tries to explain what happened to him and Jeanne. What did happen? Why? Why is it ironic that Grand expresses this situation, this disappointment to Rieux? What is the relationship between love and language? Between trust and language?

Grand's confession immediately precedes Rambert's confession. Why this contrast? And why, again, does Rieux hear these confessions?

Several times Rambert protests, "I don't belong here." What makes one belong somewhere? What do we need to feel we belong? If we don't belong, are we in exile? How do we go through our lives living in such exile?

Why does "not belonging" make Rambert imagine he is a special case? Where do you see evidence of "special cases" now, in our pandemic?

See the reflection on pity on p. 83: in what ways is pity useless? How is a closed heart a solace? How can Rieux lack pity and still be a character we find sympathetic?

What do we know about Father Paneloux? His views of God? His scholarship?

If in the midst of our pandemic Todd or some other clergyman arranged a Week of Prayer, would EVVians turn out in hundreds? Why or why not? Are we more likely to attend church during a crisis than during our ups? Do we generally agree that going to church "helps" or simply "doesn't do any harm"?

"Calamity has come upon you, my brethren, and, my brethren, you deserved it" (pp. 86-87). With whom does Paneloux share this attitude? Who amongst us typically expresses such an attitude toward disaster? What are the presuppositions about the nature of God underlying such an attitude?

Why is it raining during Paneloux's sermon?

How does Paneloux relate the plagues of Egypt to the plague of Oran? Do you see the logic? Does the analogy work?

What is a "flail of God"? How will plague (or pandemic) separate the wheat from the chaff? Whom does Paneloux consider the wheat?

On p. 87, Paneloux says, "Yet this calamity was not willed by God." Is that logical given what he said earlier? Given his comparison with the plagues of

Egypt? A few sentences later, he says, “For a long while God gazed down on this town with eyes of compassion; but He grew weary of waiting. His eternal hope was too long deferred, and now He has turned His face away from us. And so, God’s light withdrawn, we walk in darkness, in the thick darkness of this plague” (p. 88). How does all this fit with Paneloux’s notion of God? With our notions of God?

See p. 88: if the angel of pestilence hovers above Oran, and if that angel parallels Lucifer, how is that the flail of God? What are the assumptions about the relationship between God and evil?

Have we reason to rejoice in the midst of disaster? Explain.

Why does Paneloux speak almost entirely in second-person plural: *you*?

Describe the nature of Paneloux’s faith. What faith and hope does he call the citizens of Oran to?

The Sunday of Paneloux’s sermon marks the beginning of panic. Why?

How does Camus contrast the imaginations of Rieux and Grand? Consider “Hats off, gentlemen,” and Rieux’s response.

What can we say about Rambert’s classifications of bureaucrats? Do we know such?

Why is it symbolically important that just after Paneloux’s sermon the weather turns even hotter, more scorching?

How has plague “killed all the colours”?

On p. 107, what important information do we learn about the Old Spaniard? What can we say about the logic of his statement that God does not exist since otherwise there would be no need for priests (p. 108)?

Tarrou is concerned with sainthood. What is a saint?

See p. 111: what happens to the citizens’ devotion to religion when the plague continues? Why?

Describe the chief differences between Rieux and Paneloux in their attitudes toward human suffering, collective punishment, humanity’s goodness.

Notice, on p. 119, when Tarrou slips, he steadies himself against Rieux. Why important?

How is Grand the embodiment of courage?

What is the significance of all the details about Grand's sentence?

At the end of paragraph on p. 127: "Oran, we're with you!" they called emotionally. 'But not,' the doctor told himself, 'to love or to die together—and that's the only way. They're too remote.'" What does this say about exile? About love?

What attracts Cottard and Rambert to each other? Why are there so many different men involved in Cottard's scheme to get Rambert out of Oran?

Consider the equivocation on *sentence*: Grand's opening sentence, Cottard's fear of a sentence, the sentence of exile to all of Oran, the sentence of death to all mortals. What does Camus want us to think about sentences?

Why does Rambert decide to help in the sanitary squads? Rambert ultimately realizes he has practically forgotten the woman he loves—why? How typical is he?

How did Tarrou figure out Cottard's situation?

Rambert says on p. 149: "I know now that man is capable of great deeds. But if he isn't capable of great emotion, well, he leaves me cold." Is that a comment on Rambert? On Rieux? On Cottard? On all of us?

Why does Rieux tell Rambert he is not wrong in putting love first? What does Rieux know now about love that he did not know at the beginning?