

You will recall that, for this Sunday, we carry over discussion about  
“plague medals” and “heroism”  
Rambert’s conversation with the mother of Louis and Marcel about  
believing in God  
“St. James Infirmary,” the music and its sources and meaning  
Gluck’s opera *Orpheus and Eurydice*, particularly the aria Orpheus  
sings upon losing Eurydice:  
    *What is life to me without thee?*  
    *What is left if thou art dead?*  
    *What is life, life without thee?*  
    *What is life without my love?*  
in the contexts of separation, exile, death, love, memory?

See also the questions Simon asks of us, sent in separate email.

The material in 4.3 constitutes the crisis (turning point) of the novel. What do we learn about the new serum? About the characters witnessing the suffering of Othon Fils? Why does Camus include this scene? (On p. 26, Camus calls him *Philippe*; on p. 218, he calls him *Jacques*.)

The main characters gather to observe Othon Fils. How do their postures and positions in the room indicate their characters? Virtually everyone changes as a result of this scene. Why? How exactly?

Why must this scene involve the death of a child? How is this scene related directly to Christianity? (Notice how the scene is packed with Christian symbols and parallels.) What does this scene say about faith?

When Paneloux prays, “My God, spare this child!” we know something new about Paneloux. What? How has he changed since the flail-of-God sermon?

What do we observe about the suffering of innocents? How does suffering fit into Christianity? Into Paneloux’s theology? Into Rieux’s view of humanity?

Why does Rieux come to believe that “God himself can’t part us now?” with regard to himself and Paneloux? What does that mean?

Why would Paneloux write “Is a Priest Justified in Consulting a Doctor?” What are the ramifications of this question for all believers? What does it suggest about faith?

How do Paneloux’s pronouns indicate a change in his attitude about plague?

When Paneloux says to the congregation, “We must believe everything or deny everything,” what is the *everything* he refers to? Do you agree? Why or why not?

This second sermon includes an extraordinary statement of faith in God. What makes it extraordinary? Would Tillich call this faith? Where does Paneloux place his ultimate concern? Where do Rieux and others place theirs?

When Paneloux says, “My brothers, each one of us must be the one who stays” (p. 205, near the middle of 4.4), we immediately recall all of those who have stayed—Grand, Rambert, Tarrou, Rieux, others. But what Paneloux means is somehow different from what those men would mean by *staying*. Describe the differences.

Immediately after this second sermon, we learn of Paneloux’s illness. Does he live out his faith? Does he witness to God in dying? Why is Paneloux’s a “doubtful case”? What ironies do you see here?

What do we celebrate on All Souls’ Day? Why?

At the quarantine camp, what is the mood? Describe the condition of those living there. What is their frame of mind? Is this another kind of hell? Exile within exile? Explain.

After various disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, tsunamis, those displaced (exiled?) stay in shelters—created in schools, churches, arenas, elsewhere. How do such shelters differ from the quarantine camp we see here?

Contrast M. Othon at the camp with the M. Othon we first saw at the hotel. What has happened to him? Is he better off or worse off or the same? Why does Tarrou lie to M. Othon about his son’s suffering?

What does Tarrou mean when he comments, “One would like to do something to help him. But how can you help a judge”?

How did Tarrou have plague already—before coming to Oran?

At what time of day does the scene in 4.6 between Rieux and Tarrou occur? Where?

Why do we need to know Tarrou’s background? How does that information influence our sympathy for him as a character? What details about his past have most shaped him?

Describe the relationship between Tarrou’s interest in the death penalty and his interest in sainthood.

What does Tarrou mean when he says that “we all have plague”?

Notice again the emphasis on language and expression: “. . . all our troubles spring from our failure to use plain, clean-cut language.” Is that true?

*“It comes to this,” Tarrou said almost casually, “what interests me is learning how to become a saint.”*

*“But you don’t believe in God.”*

*“Exactly! Can one be a saint without God?—that’s the problem, in fact the only problem, I’m up against today.”*

Can one be a saint without God?

Consider Rieux—his interest not in heroism, not in sanctity, but in being a man—and Tarrou—his interest in being a saint: why is being a man, a human being, more difficult than being a saint or a hero?

Discuss the symbolic significance of the Rieux and Tarrou’s swim (baptismal scene). How does this scene represent all the elements of baptism? What does it mean?

How does M. Othon change? Note the inversion—the powerful magistrate at the mercy of officials. Note his humility. Why does he return to the quarantine camp?

What does Christmas season signify? Especially for Grand? What is the one thing Grand wants at Christmas? How is that wish concerned with grace?

For years Grand lived in a kind of hell, a void without Jeanne, without progress on his book or letter, without “hats off.” At the end of 4.7, we see a Pentecostal fire. Describe the significance of Pentecost. What does this mean for Grand’s life, his new life?

Why does Rieux use the word *resurrection* with Grand? Meaning what?

What does the return of rats signify? Why is their return ironic?