

Compare and CONTRAST Meursault and Sisyphus. You might want to outline the myth and its philosophical underpinnings first (using quotations) and then examine how they compare to our (anti-)hero.

Meursault: was indifferent to the world and the court decided he didn't have humanity. When they sentenced him to death, he accepted his fate and took responsibility for his actions. He finds a sense of indifference in the world that he can relate to and he doesn't mind death in the end. It wasn't bad faith that he killed someone, but he is was that he acted without morals.

Outline of Myth

1. Sisyphus dies

2. He is given permission by Hades to go back to earth to scold his wife.

3. Sisyphus tries to prevent going back to the underworld *"Mercury came and seized the impudent man by the collar and, snatching him from his joys, lead him forcibly back to the underworld..." (The Myth of Sisyphus)*

4. His punishment is to push a boulder up a mountain repeatedly. Each time he gets it up, it falls back down. *"A face that toils so close to stones is already stone itself!" (The Myth of Sisyphus)*

Roman vs. Greek Versions:

Jupiter= Zeus

Mercury= Hermes

Pluto= Hades

Bad vs Good Faith

Meursault embraced his fate of being executed whereas Sisyphus tried to prevent returning back to being dead. Meursault practiced authenticity and Sisyphus practiced bad faith. Meursault was able to accept his punishment and because he believes that everyone dies eventually and it doesn't matter when or how you die.

p. 118 "I told him I didn't know what a sin was. All they had told me was that I was guilty. I was guilty, I was paying for it, and nothing more could be asked of me."

p. 120 " He wasn't even sure he was alive, because he was living like a dead man. Whereas it looked as if I was the one who who'd come up emptyhanded. But I was sure about me, about everything, surer than he could ever be, sure of my life and sure of the death I had waiting for me."

"What would it matter if he were accused of murder and then executed because he didn't cry at his mother's funeral? Salamano's dog was worth just as much as his wife." p. 121

* Meursault accepts how everyone is “condemned”, everyone’s life amounts to the same thing: All lives are equal in the end: detached from his life and his mother’s. He knows everyone will go. Life’s meaning? It doesn’t really matter how or when people go, everyone will die. Thinks in this sense he knows more than chaplain.

Sisyphus: permission by Hades to go and see his wife. He tried to prevent his circumstances by hiding on earth and trying to evade being forced to go back down to hell/ the underworld. He exercised bad faith by going against the divine ruling that he had to turn back after a short time, and tried to stay on earth. He is punished because he chose not to follow the purpose set for him. He refused to accept his fate and went against what was “right” for him.