

Exemplar

2012 CAPE FRENCH

Unit 1 Paper 03

Question 7

*“Unexpected and unconventional”. To what extent might these words be used in relation to the text that you have studied?*

#### Knowledge and Application

In the introduction the candidate comprehends the terms “unconventional” and “unexpected” and clearly states his/her understanding of them.

The candidate is able to draw relevant examples to substantiate the points presented. This is done without too much story-telling. The focus is on the analysis of the actions of Meursault more than the actions themselves. The candidate shows that Meursault’s actions at times may indeed be considered unconventional and unexpected.

Finally, the candidate presents a balanced argument by presenting the ways in which Meursault shows conventional, expected behavior. The candidate shows an excellent knowledge and analysis of the text.

#### Organization

The candidate underscores in the introduction the layout of the points by giving a clear indication of what will be discussed. The question asks “to what extent” and the candidate presents the unconventional and unexpected in the first two paragraphs of the body and in the third paragraph gives the balanced view in response to the question.

The conclusion synthesizes the information given in the body of the essay. Relevant conclusions are drawn based on arguments presented.

The essay may have been improved by

- (i) a shorter introduction which focused more on the thematic aspect rather than the philosophical background of the book
- (ii) inclusion of any of the following points relating to Meursault:
  - (a) His association with Raymond
  - (b) His atheism
  - (c) His lack of ambition
  - (d) His abnormal behaviour after the mother’s funeral.

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## L'individu et la société.

The novel entitled "L'étranger" is written by Albert Camus and contains narrative reflective of the ideology of existentialism - a theory that classifies life as having no meaning. The novel is told in the first person point of view and is centred around the life of the protagonist, Meursault, a character that is, in every sense of the word, an outsider. Things which are unexpected are not predictable, thus come as a shock, and those which are unconventional are not in accord with the norm - both words describe the personality and actions of the narrator to a large extent. This essay seeks to show the extent to which the aforementioned words can be used in relation to L'étranger, especially in relation to Meursault who does not mourn his mother's death, who murders an Arab senselessly, yet who enjoys life in a conventional sense, <sup>and even has</sup> ~~with a girl~~ a girlfriend.

Firstly, Meursault and his actions are both unexpected and unconventional as they are at odds with society's norms and traditions, as in the case of mourning. Firstly, he stopped the caretaker when he went to open the coffin, "Il s'approchait de la bière quand je l'ai arrêté." The caretaker without asking was about to open the coffin because it was custom to view the dead, however Meursault was not interested in keeping with the tradition, not because he was extremely saddened or mourned deeply, his response, "Je ne sais pas"; therefore he didn't know why, but he was simply disinterested. Respect for the dead is also custom, Meursault was at a vigil where he was supposed only to sit in reflection, yet when offered coffee, "Comme j'aime beaucoup le café au lait, j'ai accepté." What is more, "J'ai offert une cigarette au concierge et nous avons fumé." He thus proceeded to smoke while tradition demanded he pay his respects to the dead, his mother. In addition according to the director of the home at his trial for murder "je n'avais pas pleuré une seule fois et j'étais parti aussitôt après l'enterrement sans me recueillir sur sa tombe." These are things that surprised not only the director, but also the jury because they are acts of social rebellion, for them Meursault was termed, "un homme qui trait

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accused of  
moralentent sa mère" - <sup>accused of</sup> killing his mother morally, because the unconventional nature of not properly mourning the death of family was so serious an issue that he was compared to criminals committing patricide, "qui portait une main meurtrière sur l'auteur de ses jours".

Secondly, Meursault chooses to kill an Arab, the brother of his friend, Raymond's, ex-mistress. This act is unexpected because Meursault had no personal connection to the Arab, no motive. Meursault's acquaintances, Masson and Raymond, did engage in fighting the Arabs, but nobody was fatally hurt and the two groups parted. Yet he unconsciously returned to the place <sup>where</sup> he would commit murder, he admitted when he saw the Arab, "J'ai été un peu surpris. Pour moi, c'était une histoire finie et j'étais venu là sans y penser." The act was thus not pre-meditated because logically there was no reason for him to kill the man. It was also unconventional because of the reason he provided for the crime, "J'ai dit rapidement, en mêlant un peu les mots et en me rendant compte mon ridicule, que c'était à cause du soleil". Even as he gave his reason in court, he himself realised that the excuse <sup>of the sun</sup> was nonsensical. However, it was truly what he believed to be his motive, and there was no other explanation that could be found or justified.

However, though Meursault and the majority of his acts are deemed incon-  
<sup>with the norm</sup>gruent by society, he lived a fairly average life, ~~that~~ he had a girlfriend and enjoyed life's pleasures. He worked, as must most adults, "J'ai bien travaillé toute la semaine," and he enjoyed going to the cinema, both with Marie and his friend Emmanuel, "Je suis allé au cinéma deux fois avec Emmanuel". He had a ~~girl~~ girlfriend, <sup>Marie,</sup> whom he desired, "J'ai eu très envie d'elle", and though his desires for her were simply carnal, many men have similar relationships so it is not very unconventional. His urges are physical, "Je l'ai embrassée", "nous avons été pressés... d'aller chez moi et de nous jeter sur mon lit"; but when she asked if he loved her, he replied, "cela ne voulait rien dire, mais qu'il me semblait que non." The dishonesty of many persons

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may cause his honesty to seem unconventional, but many philanderers are as honest.  
To conclude, the protagonist of the novel is unconventional and his behaviour and actions may truly be termed unexpected. However, though he does not always act in accordance with the norm, he also does not always rebel against it. While he does not conventionally mourn his mother's passing, and while ~~he~~ he kills an Arab without true reason, he is just like many people in that he works, socialises to an extent, and has a girlfriend whose company he enjoys.