



# Hope and the Absurd in The Plague by Albert Camus

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## Abstract

The article focuses on the epidemic situation of the people, optimistic perception of minds in the critical habitation and about the theory of Absurdism. It elucidates about the hope in the mist of hopelessness. The main objective is that one should not lose hope in the hardest parts of life. *The Plague* talks about a specific quantum of people who do not even try to make sense of a meaningless disease. The townspeople lose hope and are ready to die after the death of their fellow beings which indicates people's reluctance to accept the reality in an absurd situation. It focuses on Death, Suffering, Exile and Imprisonment. All these impersonal laws and procedures that allow government to treat people like statistics and with the same callousness that plagues epidemic. The catastrophe pushed us to face our mortality and accept our human existence rather than avoiding it through fear as well as diversion and should be more modest in acknowledging our smallness and our place in the universe.

**Key words:** absurd, hope, death, suffering, exile, imprisonment.

## Introduction

*The Plague* is about an epidemic disease and it explains how people suffer from an unexpected situation. The setting of the novel takes place during fifteenth and sixteenth century when the people suffered from pestilences. The set of circumstances which takes place in the novel is similar to that of the recent pandemic which motivates the researcher to explore the novel.

Fiction is created from the imagination and not presented as fact, though it may be based on a true story or situation by adding some fantasy character may increase the flavour to the story. The imaginary world presented in the fiction helps to survive in the real world.

For centuries, French literature is an object of national pride for the French people and it is one of the most influential components of the literature of Europe. The French language has unique way of pronunciation, French letter has different functions depending on the position it has on a word or a sentence. The late fifteenth century and the early sixteenth century saw the flowering of Renaissance in France. The period was also notable for advances in plays and fictions. Romanticism is also greatly influenced during that time.

This is the reflection of absurdity during the pandemic time. Camus is the twentieth century writer and a great philosopher, author and journalist. He joined French resistance where he served as an editor in chief at Combat, an outlawed newspaper. Camus areas of interest are ethics, humanity, justice, politics and suicide. Camus first publication is the play *Revolt in the Asturias* in May 1936. The subject of the play is the 1934 revolt by Spanish Minors. In May 1937, Camus wrote *Betwixt and between*. Camus separated his work in three cycles. Each cycle consists of a novel, an essay and a play. The first is the cycle of the Absurd consisting *L'Etranger*, *Le Mythe de Sysiphe* and *Caligula*. The second is the cycle of the revolt which includes *La Peate*

(*The Plague*), *L'Homme revolte (The Rebel)* and *Les Justes (The Just Assassins)*. The third cycle is about love consists of Nemesis. Albert Camus first and most famous novel takes the form of a terse, flat, first-person narrative.

*The Plague* is about, a deadly disease in the end of the nineteenth century. The death rate of rats increases abruptly in the Algerian city of Oran. To prevent the disease spreading from one person to another, the government announces lockdown and quarantines people. A young journalist Raymond Rambert and his assistant Taurro contact Dr. Rieux to document their current project based on the sanitary conditions in the city of Oran. Joseph Grand, Head of Health Council helps more on various measures taken to control the disease. Dr. Rieux's mother comes to stay with him and he informs the pest control department to take care of the uneasy condition. Rambert gets upset and wants to rejoin with his family. He finds some illegal way to escape from the town with the help of Cottard, who is working as a driver in the city of Oran. Dr. Rieux is very passionate towards his job and his selfless nature lifts him and the society even at stressful condition. The people of Oran become free and celebrate their new life but Cottard is not happy. He randomly begins to fire his gun from his balcony out of agony and police arrest him. Taurro tells Rambert that Dr. Rieux is also separated from his wife. Taurro dies due to the epidemic disease. Rambert reunites with his wife after quarantine gets over but Dr. Rieux wife passes away due to a prolonged fever.

### Perception of Hope

Absurdism is a philosophy refers to the fundamental nature of conflict in human tendency to find the meaning and inherent value in the life. The philosophy of Absurdism associates with the human believes that life is meaningless and purposeless in an irrational universe. The common elements in Absurdism novels include satire, dark humour, incongruity, the abasement of reason and controversy regarding the philosophical condition of being nothing.

Hope evolves throughout the course of *The Plague*. At first, the hope that the plague will quickly vanishes on its own is very injurious, as the citizens rely on their wishful thinking instead of taking the necessary preventative measures. Later, as the plague worsens, hope vanishes from the town altogether as the citizens give up on the town's recovery. Finally, a distinction is made between different types of hope. If man hopes for that which is possible, the humble love of another human being will be rewarded.

*The Plague* by Albert Camus and talks about the pandemic disease spread throughout the town. Camus clearly explains the human emotions during the period. The Oran townspeople do not know the natural calamities, which may bring many changes in their lives. The people of Oran, who have not come across calamities and crisis often, become completely disturbed when they are affected by Plague. The death of rats brings cold to the city. Many people do not pay attention towards rat even after their death. People of Oran face a lot of psychological, emotional and interpersonal relationship conflicts. The prime purpose of human life is to help others and if you can't help them at least don't hurt them. The Plague is sweeping everywhere in the Oran town but people are unaware of that.

Science is generally not a common man subject. Investing hope in the minds of people only through science. Science is difficult. People like Father Paneloux try to bring hope among the people through the belief in God. Life is full of pain and chaos. Religion helps to overcome chaos by beliefs. By being righteous, pious people are by following a set of rules or beliefs. People surrender themselves to some superior power and also believe that the superior power will protect them. In the face of an indifferent, destructive world humans try to tell stories to make the feel better. Positive emotions are playing vivotal role in making the life of humans better. A continuous effort by Dr. Rieux raises confidence in the young minds and they come forward to assist him. The suffering pulls the towns people into an imaginary world in the night time and they never want to come back to the normal life. Sometimes imagination also leads to tragic ends. In day life town's people face the reality with great disappointment. Imagination always gives pleasure to our life but reality speaks the hard truth. Absurd situation makes everyone to enter into an imaginary world. People like Dr. Rieux, Father Paneloux and Jean Tarrow help the people to face the reality.

The plague is a great social equalizer, and yet it creates some new feelings of tension and revolt in the town. The people have a hard time accepting that they are all going to die soon as a result they lash out both against the plague as well as against each other. Humans have a hard time accepting the harsh truth about them and they compensate with prejudices and delusions. Dr. Rieux is an admirer of human beings. Rieux use literature and language to communicate the story of the plague to others. Humans need to accept their own mortality rather than try to escape it or distract themselves from it.

## Conclusion

The researcher draws the conclusion by understanding the most important point is not to lose hope in the hardest situation of life. For example, Dr. Rieux lost his wife because of some health issues; he felt alone but never gives up his courage. Life brings both happy and sad moments. The researcher discusses the Corona virus pandemic through the lens of Albert Camus novel is set in a very different time period from today, which is not as advanced as it is today. Nevertheless, Camus narrative holds many parallels to the psychological, political and social conditions wrought by the Corona virus pandemic.

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