

Albert Camus: A Concise Biography

Albert Camus was born in Mondovi, Algeria (French Algeria, present day Dréan), on November 7, 1913. Biographers describe his family as *pied-noir* (Biography.com 2014) which means blackfeet: the people who were born of French and European origin in Algeria during the period of French rule, from 1830-1962. Camus' father died during World War I and he was raised by his mother. His family had little money and lived in the low-income section of Algiers.

Camus became political during his student years. He was a champion of individual rights: he opposed French colonialism of Algeria and argued for the power of Algerians in politics and labour. He favoured a multicultural and pluralistic society for Algeria; this was rejected by most parties. At the beginning of World War II, Camus was in Paris. After the Germans invaded France, he joined the French resistance to liberate Paris from Nazi occupation.

He became part of a circle of intellectuals including Simone de Beauvoir, André Breton, and others. He met Jean-Paul Sartre during his period of military service. Like Sartre, Camus wrote and published political commentary on the conflict. He was one of a few to criticize the American detonation of two nuclear bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945.

Camus' writing contains elements of absurdism and existentialism. His pieces elucidate the absurdity of social and traditional constructs.

Albert Camus brought a new "outsider" (ibid) perspective to France in his period of literature. This is the reason for Camus winning the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1957.

Vocabulary

Absurd: wildly unreasonable, illogical, or inappropriate.

Existentialism: a philosophical theory or approach which emphasizes the existence of the individual person as a free and responsible agent determining their own development through acts of free will.

Works Cited

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