QUESTIONS ON “THE GUEST” (all classes)

1. Why would Balducci have come to a schoolmaster to deliver the prisoner, and what is the significance behind Daru's own occupation and his attitude toward the Arab? Why does the gendarme leave the Arab with Daru even after Daru refuses to turn him in? What is Camus saying about the French Government’s handling of Algeria based on how the gendarme behaves? What do you think Camus was trying to convey in this story about colonialism in Algeria? Did he consider it to all be horrible or did he see some merit in it? Why is it important that the Arab is not a rebel? How is realism important alongside the story’s existential and absurdist themes?
2. There is a recurrent motif of war-related things, such as phrases and words like "ration", "army of ragged ghosts", and bursting into dust", but the setting of a remote plateau and a school does not support this language. What is the point of the motif when compared to knowledge and generally calm surroundings? Why would knowledge and war be put on the same level as one another? Consider that Camus was one of the few reporters to denounce the United States for dropping the atomic bombs on Japan. What do you believe the final line about Daru being alone could mean? Why do you think Camus would add this when it can be assumed the Arab’s clan would come to avenge him? Consider the implications of Daru’s character from this line, and how it can contribute to the absurdist nature of the story as a whole.
3. "The Guest" takes place in the French-Algerian Daru's home on an isolated plateau in Algeria in a time of political unrest between Algerians and the French colonial rule. How does isolation and Camus’ existential and absurdist style pertain to Daru's moral conflict in the story? What is the significance of Camus’ focus on morality? Consider how Daru acts towards the Arab and Balducci, and how Daru’s thoughts shift and vacillate over the course of the story. How could racism play a significant role in this story on several levels? Could Daru’s desire for solitude or time spent only with his students add insight to his moral quandaries? How does suspense as a stylistic choice add to the mood of the piece concerning its focus on choice and morality?
4. Criminals are often looked down upon and treated as subhuman by many people. How does Camus’ portrayal of a killer challenge these assertions? Explain the paradox of the title "The Guest". How does the title change meaning over the course of the story? What does the title, "The Guest," as opposed to the actual connection between Daru and the Arab, show about Camus' view on criminal actions and human relationships? Why does the Arab choose to take a harder path to jail after being set free? Could the Arab’s choice have something to do with the way Daru treated him, both at the schoolhouse and directly before Daru leaves the Arab? What could Camus be saying about punishment or guilt as a result of the Arab's choice? What does the Arab's choice tell us about him as a person, and what could that say about humanity as a whole?
5. Absurdism plays a major role in validating characters’ decisions that don't necessarily make sense (either at first or not at all). What is the significance of the Arab never being named? Why does Daru give up the Arab even though he specifically believes it contrary to his honor? What does his “heavy heart” as he watches the Arab walk down the road show about Daru’s character? What does it show about Camus as the author? At the end of the short story, the words “You handed over our brother. You will pay for this” were written upon the blackboard. Would Daru still have given the Arab the decision between prison and freedom if he knew that he would be threatened? What is the significance regarding the ending’s irony? How does the ending impact our understanding of existentialism and absurdism?