

# Skokie Public Library's Book Discussion Guide

## THE PLAGUE

by Albert Camus

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- The disaster that strikes the town of Oran in Albert Camus' *The Plague* is literally the bubonic plague, but this epidemic can also be seen as a metaphor or allegory for something else. What are some possible allegoric interpretations of the literal plague?
- As a philosopher, Camus is associated with the concept of the absurd hero, that is, someone who persists in meaningless, ludicrous, or irrational behavior. Where do we see this sort of absurdity in *The Plague*? What are we to make of it?
- Why does Rieux say that Grand is the "hero" (137) of *The Plague*?
- Camus said that *The Plague* was the most anti-Christian of his works. Do you see it that way?
- Where are women in *The Plague*? If there aren't many female characters in the book, do we see examples of "feminine" behaviors in it?
- Why does Camus place so much emphasis on separation or exile as principal horrors of the plague that strikes Oran?
- In what ways does *The Plague* present an unrealistic account a modern city facing pestilence? Does Camus gain something by not giving an accurate portrayal of a city in quarantine?
- What are the major choices facing the book's characters such as Tarrou, Rampert, and Father Paneloux? What do they decide and how do they make their decisions?
- Tarrou wonders "Can one be a saint without God?" (255). What answer do you think Camus would make to this question?
- What is the significance of the scenes at the performance of Gluck's Orpheus or of Tarrou's night swim with Rieux?
- Do any of the characters experience lasting change as a result of their experiences with the plague?
- *The Plague* ends with a suggestion that the story will begin again someday with another plague. Why does Camus end the book this way?



**Skokie Public Library**

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