

THE FALL

by Albert Camus



THE AUTHOR

Albert Camus (1913-1960) was born in Algeria, which was then a French colonial possession. His father was killed in battle in World War I a year after Albert's birth, leaving his family in poverty. Camus worked his way through the university of Algiers by doing odd jobs, but dropped out after a severe bout of tuberculosis. He then turned to journalism, writing for an anti-colonial newspaper in Algeria, and briefly turned to communism, with which he quickly became disillusioned, before moving to France. During World War II, he served as part of the French Resistance against the Nazi occupation forces, editing the underground newspaper *Combat*.

It was during his years in the Resistance that he developed his philosophy of the absurdity of life, which he expressed clearly in his first novel, *The Stranger* (1942). Soon after he published *The Myth of Sisyphus*, expounding further on the ideas presented in the novel. Later novels, including *The Plague* (1948) and *The Fall* (1957), also met with widespread success, leading to his being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957. Throughout his career, Camus was also fascinated with the theater, writing several plays and translating and adapting numerous works by others for the French stage. He was killed when he wrecked his sports car in 1960.

The Fall is a novel about a man who, like Camus himself, struggled to deal with sin in a world without God, guilt in a world with no grace. The author grasps, far better than many Christians and almost all humanists, the reality of self-centeredness in the best works done by the most noble of men. Sadly, he finds no solution aside from acknowledging universal guilt, thus enabling one to live with one's own depravity.

This study guide is based on the 1956 Vintage paperback translated by Justin O'Brien; the book contains no chapter numbers, but I have numbered the divisions in the novel for ease of reference.

PLOT SUMMARY

Chapter 1

The story takes place in a bar in Amsterdam called *Mexico City*. The narrator, a former Parisian lawyer named Jean-Baptiste Clamence, is engaged in a conversation with a stranger in the bar, though we do not hear the other half of the discourse. He begins by remarking on the bestial nature of the bartender, who seems by nature to trust no one. The narrator is cynical about mainstream society, arguing that it, like a school of piranhas, nibbles away at a man bite by bite until there is nothing left of him. Clamence, tells his new companion that he used to be a lawyer, but now he is a judge-penitent. He questions his friend, deducing that he is middle-aged, relatively prosperous and well-educated, and somewhat open-minded. He asks him if he has ever shared his wealth with the poor, and when the man responds in the negative, he tells him that he is a Sadducee. Clamence, too, is a Sadducee, for he was rich and gave nothing to the poor, yet now he is poor himself, having nothing. He lives in what used to be the Jewish quarter until Hitler depopulated it. He tells the tale of a woman forced by a German officer to choose which of her sons would be shot, and a pacifist who welcomed all into his home and was disemboweled by the militia. He then remarks on the Hollanders, insisting that they are men wandering around in a dream, their minds far away from their bodies. He compares the canals of Amsterdam to the circles of Hell and decides that the *Mexico City* is at the center of the deepest circle, where all the refuse of Europe congregate. The two agree to meet the next day, and Clamence suggests his friend visit one of the prostitutes whose houses they pass on the way home.

Chapter 2

When they meet the next day, Clamence tells his new friend something about himself. First of all, Clamence is not his real name; he was once a famous lawyer in Paris who specialized in noble causes such as defending widows and orphans, whom he never charged for his services. He avoided corruption of all kinds and even refused the Legion of Honor when it was offered to him. He would even run to help a blind person across a street, being sure to arrive before any potential competition. He was unfailingly helpful to strangers, bought trifles from peddlers, and gave alms to the poor. He was courteous in the extreme, giving up his seat on the bus and letting others take a taxi ahead of him. He always preferred the heights to the depths - hilltops to caves, balconies to basements. In general, he was enamored of his own admirable nature. He realized that the criminals he defended, like him, often sought to enhance their own reputations, but the fame of the criminal is usually short-lived, while the renown of the benefactor remains for all to see and appreciate. He was popular and in demand in all the best circles. He realized, however, that his success was not due to his own merits, but to being for some reason chosen by Fate for superlative happiness. Yet with all this, he was not satisfied, but always longer for more pleasure. Each festivity left him convinced for the moment that he had found the secret of ultimate happiness, but the feeling would always leave him the next morning. He found friendship to be empty, so much so that one only truly loved someone after he died, when one felt no obligation toward him. Along those lines, he remembers how he and others responded to the death of a particularly unpleasant concierge. The man's wife spent lavishly on his funeral, then proceeded to have an affair with a singer who beat her mercilessly; after he left, she continued to praise her monstrosity of a dead husband. Then one warm evening, everything

changed. He was standing on a bridge and heard laughter. . . . At that point he interrupts his story and promises to continue it the next day; he needs to defend a local art thief.

Chapter 3

In the days that followed, he did not hear the laugh again, but he stopped taking nocturnal walks across the Seine. At the same time he began to experience depression. At this point he interrupts the story and asks his companion if they can leave the bar and take a walk. They pass a house that used to belong to a slave trader, and Clamence remarks that everyone needs slaves of some sort, even if only a wife, children, or a dog. He then returns to speaking of himself, describing himself as a consummate play actor whose entire focus was on himself while he pretended to be a benefactor to all. These things he gradually discovered about himself after the evening when he heard the laugh.

One particular incident stood out in his mind: he was driving when a motorcycle cut him off at a red light, then promptly stalled. He asked the man to move his bike, but he profanely refused. When Clamence got out of his car, a bystander told him to leave the man alone, then punched him in the face, at which point the cycle started and people began honking at Clamence to move his car. Later, he considered that he should have hit the bystander back, chased the motorcycle, and thrashed the rude driver; his failure to do so played on his mind for weeks. He could no longer picture himself as the bold opponent of evil, and his desire to beat the malefactor led him to question his supposed altruism.

He then goes on to explain that he was always successful in getting what he wanted from women. He saw them as “objects of pleasure and conquest,” while his only true love object was himself. Women both satisfied his carnal lusts and his passion for gambling. He derived more pleasure from brief sexual encounters than from intellectual discussions of the highest order. He shares with his companion some of the strategies he used to get women into his bed, and confessed that these couplings, while they satisfied his desires, even more fed his love of power over others. One of his one-night stands, however, was especially troubling. A girl who seemed to him very passive and submissive later told one of her friends about his deficiencies as a lover. He couldn’t stand such humiliation and worked to get her back, then proceeded to treat her shabbily and finally left her. From that day forward he began to laugh at himself - his grand speeches in court and the lines he used with women - because he recognized then that he was a hypocrite.

What, then, was the incident that changed his life? Two or three years before hearing the laughter on the bridge, he was crossing the same bridge and saw a woman looking into the water. After he passed her, he heard a splash and a cry, but did nothing. For several days after that, he refused to read the newspaper and thus knew nothing of the woman’s fate.

Chapter 4

The next morning the two men meet at the *Mexico City* to take a trip to the island of Marken. As they look out on the sea, the sand, and the dikes, everything is gray and barren, “everlasting nothingness made visible.” He admits that he has no friends; he knows this because if he committed suicide, no one would really care, and besides, he would be unable to see their reaction. In addition, they would make up absurd and inevitably wrong reasons for why he took his life.

How did his awareness of his selfishness make him feel? Rather than being upset with himself, he handily set aside his own shortcomings and busied himself with the task of judging

others. In order to avoid being judged by them in turn, he began to distance himself from those around him. He realized that he had many enemies, not only within his profession, but also among casual acquaintances who resented minor slights or merely were jealous of his success. Soon he began to feel that all the world was laughing at him behind his back.

Everyone, however, wants to be thought innocent, and is willing to judge everyone else in order to maintain the fiction. Even criminals long to hear that their deeds are due to circumstances of birth or environment beyond their control, believing that their virtues are inherent while their faults are merely provisional. We all long to be confirmed in our chosen lifestyle, thus relieving any guilt without the need for real change. The only excuse Clamence can think of for his behavior is that he cannot bring himself to take human affairs seriously. Nonetheless he continued to live his life in an outwardly normal fashion, while inwardly he was unable to forgive himself. Eventually he had to escape. He considered death, but realized that it would be necessary to confess all his lies before dying; if he failed to do so, those lies would be permanently inscribed in people's assessment of him. He thought about doing all the horrible things he harbored in his mind: bumping into a blind man, insulting workers in the street, slapping children in the subway, and found that the thoughts gave him pleasure, though he never put them into practice. He did, however, argue that the oppressed visited oppression on decent people by their importunity, praised the police and spoke of the virtues of the guillotine, and even went so far as to speak of God in a café frequented by freethinkers. In short, he sought to destroy his undeserved reputation.

Chapter 5

As their boat moves through the water, Clamence continues his story. In his depressed condition, he sought the company of women, desperately hoping that the love of someone else would relieve his pain. The result was deceiving the women he professed to love and damaging them without helping himself. He then turned to enforced celibacy, but when his relationships with women were limited to friendship, he found them terribly boring. His next attempt to escape involved drunkenness and debauchery, which created no obligations to others. The only thing he gained from this quest for immortality was a destroyed liver and chronic fatigue, though he did find that the sound of laughter ringing in his ears was drowned out by his excesses. He also, however, lost all emotion and became dead inside. During all this time he continued his work as a lawyer, though his reputation declined and his clients grew fewer, more from his verbal affronts than from his debauched lifestyle.

One day he was on an ocean liner and suddenly realized that the cry he had heard years before on the Seine had never left him and never would, waiting for him whenever he was on the water. At that point he knew that he would never escape, never be cured, and that he must live forever in the little-ease (this term referred to a cell in medieval dungeons that was too short to stand in and too narrow to lie down). He argues that we can never escape from the judgment of others and ourselves; who needs a God to judge when we have each other? He then insists that Jesus was crucified because he, unlike other men, knew that he was guilty - not of the crime of which he was accused, but of others such as the slaughter of the innocents in Bethlehem who died because of him. The only way to escape his guilt was to die, so he was not the only one who continued to live. Clamence is able to identify with, and even love, such a man, though neither he nor anyone else is able to die the way Jesus did, and those who claim to follow him trample him underfoot in the process, using him as a justification for judging others. Clamence doesn't place all the blame on Christians, though; atheists are no better in their propensity to pass judgment on others. But, he claims, he has found

a way out of this torture chamber, which he intends to share with his companion when they meet the following day.

Chapter 6

When his companion arrives the next morning, Clamence is still in bed, under the weather. He startles his friend by announcing that he was named pope in a prison camp. During World War II he had been summoned to North Africa to help in the retreat, then returned to occupied France. He looked into joining the Resistance, but it didn't appeal to him, so he returned to North Africa with the intention of making his way to England. In Tunisia, he took a job with a woman who was subsequently arrested by the Germans, and he along with her. He was interned in a prison camp where he met a young man who, disillusioned with the Catholic Church's support of Franco in Spain, insisted that a new pope was needed. The prisoners elected Clamence, whose main duty was to manage the water ration. One day he drank the water intended for a dying man, convinced that the group needed him more than the man who was about to expire anyway. At this point, his great revelation came to him: that one must forgive the pope.

He then shows his guest a panel from van Eyck's Ghent Altarpiece, *The Adoration of the Lamb*, called "The Just Judges." He claims that this is the original, stolen by the art thief in *Mexico City* and entrusted to him by the bartender. The presence of this masterpiece in his cupboard, while an excellent copy is viewed by thousands and judged to be the original, enables him to carry out his profession of judge-penitent. This involves judging everyone as guilty and allowing no excuses. He then argues that everyone must acknowledge a master of some kind; even atheists he knows pray to God in secret. In the depths of their hearts they believe in sin, but never in grace.

Clamence himself determined that he first needed to be a penitent in order to become a judge of others. In order to do this, he closed his legal office in Paris and sought a place where he could practice the law among the dregs of society; the *Mexico City*, a bar along the docks in Amsterdam, became his new office. He seeks out in particular the bourgeois who is slumming and begins by overwhelming him with a lengthy confession. When he is finished, the picture of himself that he has painted becomes a mirror before the one to whom he speaks, provoking his companion to judge himself. He then waits patiently for his companion to confess his own sins. Clamence now finds contentment in being able to do whatever he wants because he can always confess it openly. He hopes that one day he will confess to a policeman, who will arrest him for the theft of the painting, and he will subsequently be executed. But that is really too much to hope for. He is pleased, however, to find that his companion is also a Parisian lawyer, one with whom he has everything in common. He wishes, finally, to relive that moment when the young woman threw herself off the bridge so he could save her this time, but is inwardly happy that it is too late.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

- Jean-Baptiste Clamence - The narrator of the story, he is a former Parisian lawyer who has lost his idealism.
- The lawyer - A Frenchman who meets Clamence in a bar in Amsterdam and listens to his monologue.

NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“Anyone who has considerably meditated on man, by profession or vocation, is led to feel nostalgia for the primates. They at least don’t have ulterior motives.” (ch.1, p.4)

“Do you want a good clean life? Like everybody else?’ You say yes, of course. How can one say no? ‘O.K. You’ll be cleaned up. Here’s a job, a family, and organized leisure activities.’ And the little teeth attack the flesh, right down to the bone.” (ch.1, p.7-8)

“When one has no character one *has* to apply a method.” (ch.1, p.11)

“Have you noticed that Amsterdam’s concentric canals resemble the circles of hell? The middle-class hell, of course, peopled with bad dreams.” (ch.1, p.14)

“I was buoyed up by two sincere feelings: the satisfaction of being on the right side of the bar and an instinctive scorn for judges in general.” (ch.2, p.18)

“The feeling of the law, the satisfaction of being right, the joy of self-esteem, *cher monsieur*, are powerful incentives for keeping us upright or keeping us moving forward. On the other hand, if you deprive men of them, you transform them into dogs frothing with rage.” (ch.2, p.18)

“I took pleasure in life and in my own excellence.” (ch.2, p.25)

“To tell the truth, just from being so fully and simply a man, I looked upon myself as something of a superman.” (ch.2, p.28)

“This, after all, was a result of my modesty. I refused to attribute that success to my own merits and could not believe that the conjunction in a single person of such different and extreme virtues was the result of chance alone. This is why in my happy life I felt somehow that that happiness was authorized by some higher decree.” (ch.2, p.29)

“I was at ease in everything, to be sure, but at the same time satisfied with nothing.” (ch.2, p.29-30)

“That’s the way man is, *cher monsieur*. He has two faces: he can’t love without self-love.” (ch.2, p.33-34)

“If pimps and thieves were invariably sentenced, all decent people would get to thinking they themselves were constantly innocent, *cher monsieur*. And in my opinion . . . , that’s what must be avoided above all. Otherwise, everything would be just a joke.” (ch.2, p.41)

“I am well aware that one can’t get along without domineering or being served. Every man needs slaves as he needs fresh air.” (ch.3, p.44)

“Somebody has to have the last word. Otherwise, every reason can be answered with another one and there would never be an end to it. Power, on the other hand, settles everything.” (ch.3, p.45)

“I learned at least that I was on the side of the guilty, the accused, only in exactly so far as their crime caused me no harm. Their guilt made me eloquent because I was not its victim.” (ch.3, p.55-56)

“On my own admission, I could live happily only on condition that all the individuals on earth, or the greatest possible number, were turned toward me, eternally in suspense, devoid of independent life and ready to answer my call at any moment, doomed in short to sterility until the day I should deign to favor them. In short, for me to live happily it was essential for the creatures I chose not to live at all. They must receive their life, sporadically, only at my bidding.” (ch.3, p.68)

“I have no more friends; I have nothing but accomplices. To make up for this, their number has increased; they are the whole human race.” (ch.4, p.73)

“In order to cease being a doubtful case, one has to cease being.” (ch.4, p.75)

“The moment I grasped that there was something to judge in me, I realized that there was in them an irresistible vocation for judgment.” (ch.4, p.78)

“Each of us insists on being innocent at all cost, even if he has to accuse the whole human race and heaven itself.” (ch.4, p.81)

“We confess to those who are like us and who share our weaknesses. Hence we don’t want to improve ourselves or be bettered, for we should first have to be judged in default. We merely wish to be pitied and encouraged in the course we have chosen. In short, we should like, at the same time, to cease being guilty and yet not to make the effort of cleansing ourselves.” (ch.4, p.83)

“I realized, as a result of delving into my own memory, that modesty helped me to shine, humility to conquer, and virtue to oppress.” (ch.4, p.84)

“For more than thirty years I had been in love exclusively with myself. What hope was there of losing such a habit?” (ch.5, p.100)

“I was bursting with a longing to be immortal. I was too much in love with myself not to want the precious object of my love never to disappear.” (ch.5, p.102)

“True debauchery is liberating because it creates no obligations. In it you possess only yourself; hence it remains the favorite pastime of the great lovers of their own person. It is a jungle without past or future, without any promise above all, nor any immediate penalty. The places where it is practiced are separated from the world. On entering, one leaves behind fear and hope.” (ch.5, p.103)

“I had to submit and admit my guilt. I had to live in the little-ease.” (ch.5, p.109)

“We cannot assert the innocence of anyone, whereas we can state with certainty the guilt of all. Every man testifies to the crime of all the others - that is my faith and my hope” (ch.5, p.110)

“Believe me, religions are on the wrong track the moment they moralize and fulminate commandments. God is not needed to create guilt or to punish. Our fellow men suffice, aided by ourselves.” (ch.5, p.110)

“God’s sole usefulness would be to guarantee innocence, and I am inclined to see religion rather as a huge laundering venture - as it was once but briefly, for exactly three years, and it wasn’t called religion.” (ch.5, p.111)

“Since we are all judges, we are all guilty before one another, all Christs in our mean manner, one by one crucified, always without knowing. We should be at least if I, Clamence, had not found a way out, the only solution, truth at last. . . .” (ch.5, p.116-117)

“Fortunately, *I* arrived! I am the end and the beginning; I announce the law. In short, I am a judge-penitent.” (ch.5, p.118)

“My great idea is that one must forgive the pope. To begin with, he needs it more than anyone else. Secondly, that’s the only way to set oneself above him.” (ch.6, p.127)

“No excuses, ever, for anyone; that’s my principle at the outset. I deny the good intention, the respectable mistake, the indiscretion, the extenuating circumstance.” (ch.6, p.131)

“For anyone who is alone, without God and without a master, the weight of days is dreadful. Hence one must choose a master, God being out of style.” (ch.6, p.133)

“[Atheists] believe solely in sin, never in grace.” (ch.6, p.135)

“The essential is to cease being free and to obey, in repentance, a greater rogue than oneself. When we are all guilty, that will be democracy.” (ch.6, p.136)

“I haven’t changed my way of life; I continue to love myself and to make use of others. Only, the confession of my crimes allows me to begin again lighter in heart and to taste a double enjoyment, first of my nature and secondly of a charming repentance.” (ch.6, p.142)

“O young woman, throw yourself into the water again so that I may a second time have the chance of saving both of us!” (ch.6, p.147)

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. The title of Albert Camus’ *The Fall* is meant to elicit a comparison with the story of the Fall of Man in Genesis 3. Compare and contrast the views of human sin found in the Bible and the novel. Of what does the Fall consist in the two works? Does Camus ever succeed in explaining the source of sin?

2. Isaiah 64:6 tells us that “all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.” While Christians recognize that even the most moral deeds performed by sinful man do nothing to make him acceptable before God, humanists generally reject any such assessment of the human condition. Albert Camus, however, recognized clearly the essential selfishness of the best of human actions, as he acknowledges in his novel *The Fall*. Discuss his understanding of the sinful condition of man in the novel and compare it to the Bible’s teaching on the subject.
3. In the first section of Albert Camus’ *The Fall*, the speaker says, “Anyone who has considerably meditated on man, by profession or vocation, is led to feel nostalgia for the primates. They at least don’t have ulterior motives.” What ulterior motives does the author have in mind? Why does he consider these to be a problem? From a biblical perspective, why is it important to consider motives as well as actions when evaluating a person’s character?
4. In the first section of Albert Camus’ *The Fall*, the speaker says, “Do you want a good clean life? Like everybody else?’ You say yes, of course. How can one say no? ‘O.K. You’ll be cleaned up. Here’s a job, a family, and organized leisure activities.’ And the little teeth attack the flesh, right down to the bone.” Why does he consider what George Bernard Shaw called “middle-class morality” to be so destructive? In what ways is he right and in what ways is he wrong?
5. In the first section of Albert Camus’ *The Fall*, the speaker compares the canal system of Amsterdam to the circles of Hell in Dante’s *Inferno*. What is he trying to bring out through the comparison? What is he saying about the bar in which he spends his time? about himself? Be sure to give attention to the nature of the lowest circle of Hell in Dante’s poem.
6. In the second section of Albert Camus’ *The Fall*, the speaker says, “I was buoyed up by two sincere feelings: the satisfaction of being on the right side of the bar and an instinctive scorn for judges in general.” How does his attitude change by the end of the novel, both in terms of his understanding of himself and his attitude toward judges? What brings about these changes?
7. In the second section of Albert Camus’ *The Fall*, the speaker says, “The feeling of the law, the satisfaction of being right, the joy of self-esteem, *cher monsieur*, are powerful incentives for keeping us upright or keeping us moving forward. On the other hand, if you deprive men of them, you transform them into dogs frothing with rage.” Would you agree that the only reason people behave in an upright manner is because of the approval of their own hearts and the surrounding society? Why or why not? Your answer should include both the author’s justification for the statement and an analysis of the Bible’s teaching on the subject.
8. In the second part of Albert Camus’ *The Fall*, the speaker uses Janus as a symbol for himself and for humanity in general when he says, “That’s the way man is, *cher monsieur*. He has two faces: he can’t love without self-love.” Is it true that all of man’s love is corrupted by self-love? Why or why not? Consider both what the Bible says about human nature and what it teaches about the condition of one redeemed by Christ.

9. In the second section of Albert Camus' *The Fall*, the speaker says, "This, after all, was a result of my modesty. I refused to attribute that success to my own merits and could not believe that the conjunction in a single person of such different and extreme virtues was the result of chance alone. This is why in my happy life I felt somehow that that happiness was authorized by some higher decree." What could someone who does not believe in God possibly mean by "some higher decree"? Is this really a statement of modesty? Why or why not?
10. In the second section of Albert Camus' *The Fall*, the speaker says, "If pimps and thieves were invariably sentenced, all decent people would get to thinking they themselves were constantly innocent, *cher monsieur*. And in my opinion . . . , that's what must be avoided above all. Otherwise, everything would be just a joke." Evaluate the idea that most people's concept of their own righteousness comes from comparing themselves with those who are worse, and that this allows them to consider themselves to be good people. Why does the author, given his secularist perspective, believe this should be avoided?
11. Irving Kristol once argued that "a conservative is a liberal who has been mugged." In the third section of Albert Camus' *The Fall*, the speaker says, "I learned at least that I was on the side of the guilty, the accused, only in exactly so far as their crime caused me no harm. Their guilt made me eloquent because I was not its victim." What do these two quotations imply about the foundation of political liberalism and its relationship to human experience? Are the journalist and the novelist viewing the issue from the same perspective? Why or why not?
12. Perhaps no greater description of narcissism has been penned than that found in the third section of Albert Camus' *The Fall*, where the speaker says, "On my own admission, I could live happily only on condition that all the individuals on earth, or the greatest possible number, were turned toward me, eternally in suspense, devoid of independent life and ready to answer my call at any moment, doomed in short to sterility until the day I should deign to favor them. In short, for me to live happily it was essential for the creatures I chose not to live at all. They must receive their life, sporadically, only at my bidding." To what extent is this an accurate description of the human condition apart from the grace of God? What other statements in the novel communicate the same idea? What in the bible would lead us to the same conclusion?
13. In the fourth section of Albert Camus' *The Fall*, the speaker says, "Each of us insists on being innocent at all cost, even if he has to accuse the whole human race and heaven itself." Support this assertion with other statements from the novel and with examples from everyday experience. Is it true that people, in order to maintain a sense of their own goodness, are willing to blame others and even God for bad things that happen to them and in the world in general?

14. In the fourth section of Albert Camus' *The Fall*, the speaker says, "I realized, as a result of delving into my own memory, that modesty helped me to shine, humility to conquer, and virtue to oppress." Why is striving for humility an exercise in futility apart from the grace of God? Why are outward shows of virtue often little more than a mask for pride and a sense of superiority?
15. In the fifth section of Albert Camus' *The Fall*, the speaker says, "I had to submit and admit my guilt. I had to live in the little-ease." What does he mean by the little-ease, and what is its relevance to the human condition in the view of the author? If the author is right, does any hope remain for man in this world? Why or why not? How does Camus answer this question, and how does the Bible answer it?
16. In the last section of Albert Camus' *The Fall*, the speaker states that "[Atheists] believe solely in sin, never in grace." What does the author mean by this? Do atheists really believe in sin? To what extent does the novel itself support the idea that grace does not exist?
17. In the last section of Albert Camus' *The Fall*, the speaker states, "When we are all guilty, that will be democracy." Is he speaking of a political system, or something much deeper? Why is the universal acknowledgment of sin essential, not only for political democracy to function effectively, but also for proper human relationships?
18. At the end of Albert Camus' *The Fall*, the speaker cries out, "O young woman, throw yourself into the water again so that I may a second time have the chance of saving both of us!" If he had saved the young woman, would this really have saved him the anguish that he experienced afterward? Would he have been better off had he not gone through the transformation that was brought about by his apathy toward the girl? Why or why not?
19. In Albert Camus' *The Plague* (1948), the author argued that people contained more of good than of evil inside them, while in *The Fall* (1957), his last novel, he sees man as irredeemably evil. What might explain the change in his understanding of human nature in the decade between the two works? What is the significance of the fact that, in the earlier work, he pictures evil as something essentially outside of man, while in the latter work it is clearly something within?
20. In Jean-Paul Sartre's play *No Exit*, one of the characters famously concludes that "Hell is other people." In Albert Camus' *The Fall*, the central character says, "Believe me, religions are on the wrong track the moment they moralize and fulminate commandments. God is not needed to create guilt or to punish. Our fellow men suffice, aided by ourselves." Compare and contrast the two views of human relationships. Are the two Existentialists saying essentially the same thing? Use quotations from the two works to support your assessment.
21. In the first section of Albert Camus' *The Fall*, the speaker compares the canal system of Amsterdam to the circles of Hell in Dante's *Inferno*. Many critics have noted the similarity of Dante's journey through the circles of Hell and the decline and downfall of Clamence in Camus' novel. Find as many connections as you can between the two, paying special attention to the sequence of the circles and their relationship to Clamence's fall.

22. In Dante's *Inferno*, the gates of Hell carry the superscription, "Abandon hope, all ye that enter here." When the narrator in Albert Camus' *The Fall* speaks of debauchery, he describes it as a jungle, a place separated from the world, where one who enters "leaves behind fear and hope." While Dante portrays the afterlife, Camus speaks of the human condition. Why does he compare it to Hell, and in what ways is it like the Inferno pictured by the Medieval Italian poet?
23. Albert Camus' *The Fall* and Augustine of Hippo's *Confessions* both serve as confessions of sin, with the former explicitly indebted to the latter. Compare and contrast the two works in terms of the nature of the sins confessed, the growth of the protagonist, and the final outcome of the confessional process.
24. Albert Camus' *The Fall* draws heavily from the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine. Both have much to say about love, both true and false - the love of women, the love of self, and the love of God. Compare and contrast the ways in which the two works deal with the subject of love. Why does the former conclude that true love is not possible, while the latter finds the secret to perfect love?
25. Discuss the significance of the theft of the panel from the Ghent Altarpiece in Albert Camus' *The Fall* and compare and contrast it with the story of the theft of pears by a young Augustine in his *Confessions*. What are both stories intended to reveal about the sinfulness of the protagonist and of the human race in general? Be sure to consider the contexts in which these incidents occur in the respective books.
26. In Albert Camus' *The Fall*, the main character describes himself as a judge-penitent. What does he mean by this? How does the author see this role as a solution to the human dilemma he has graphically set forth in his novel? From a biblical perspective, why is this solution inadequate?
27. At the end of the fifth section of Albert Camus' *The Fall*, the main character speaks of Jesus, why he admires Him, and why He has been misunderstood. Evaluate his assessment of Jesus, who He was, and what He accomplished, along with the ways in which society has used Him for their own terribly mixed motives. His foundational view of Jesus is clearly wrong from a biblical perspective, but what about his idea concerning how Christ has been misunderstood and misused? Does it have any validity?
28. Near the end of the fifth section of Albert Camus' *The Fall*, the main character insisted that he has found "the way out, the only solution, the truth at last." What is his solution, his way out? Evaluate it, both in the context of the author's worldview and in the light of the teachings of Scripture.
29. In the Bible, the Fall of Man is unquestionably a harmful event, but is the same the case in Albert Camus' *The Fall*? Is the protagonist better off after his experience on the bridge, or is his condition worse? Consider his subjective experience, his self-understanding, and his understanding of the world and mankind in general in your analysis.

30. In the third section of Albert Camus' *The Fall*, the main character argues that "every man needs slaves as he needs fresh air," while in the last section he insists that "For anyone who is alone, without God and without a master, the weight of days is dreadful. Hence one must choose a master, God being out of style." What do the two statements mean? Is Camus arguing that both of these are true, or does the protagonist's thinking change by the end of the book? From a biblical standpoint, is it true that everyone needs a master?
31. The conclusion of Albert Camus' *The Fall* in a sense portrays a distorted picture of Roman Catholicism. In the same way that nominal Catholics go to confession, receive absolution, then go out and live as they please, only to repeat the cycle over and over again, so Clamence confesses at great length to those he meets in the bar, then continues to live his life of corruption. Why is such a form of "salvation" never sufficient, both in its religious and secular forms? How does the biblical picture of repentance and forgiveness differ from both of these?
32. At the end of Albert Camus' *The Fall*, the narrator halfheartedly wishes that he could live over again the night when he ignored the woman leaping from the bridge, but then admits that he is glad that no second chances are possible. While we certainly cannot turn the clock back and undo what has been done in the past, we know that God is a God of second chances. In what sense is this true? How does the grace of God enable Christians to deal with the powerful memories of past sins despite the fact that they cannot be undone? If you were the person listening to Clamence's confession in the bar, what answer would you have given him when he expressed his relief that one cannot relive the past?
33. Discuss the symbolism of water in Albert Camus' *The Fall*. Consider the central event of the story, the narrator's later reference to baptism in chapter five, and even the pseudonym he has chosen for himself, along with the prevalence of canals, rivers, and the sea. Does the author associate water with cleansing or with pollution? Support your analysis with specific quotations from the novel.
34. The name chosen by the narrator in Albert Camus' *The Fall*, Jean-Baptiste Clamence, means "John the Baptist, Crier." In what ways does the author intend to compare his protagonist to John the Baptist? Clearly he does not announce the coming of the Messiah, but is he a voice in the wilderness? Does he call people to repentance? Does he initiate them into a new way of life? Support your analysis with specifics from the novel.