Exploring Existentialism

Philosophy · Answer Key · 25 Questions

1. Which 19th-century philosopher is often called the 'father of existentialism' for his focus on individual choice?

A) Søren Kierkegaard
B) John Locke
C) Plato
D) Aristotle

2. Which French philosopher and writer became the most famous face of existentialism in the 20th century?

A) Jean-Paul Sartre
B) René Descartes
C) Voltaire
D) Victor Hugo

3. Existentialism places a heavy emphasis on the importance of what?

A) Individual freedom
B) Mathematical logic
C) Religious rituals
D) Scientific experiments

4. Which famous existentialist author wrote the novel 'The Stranger' (L'Étranger)?

A) Albert Camus
B) Marcel Proust
C) Émile Zola
D) Honoré de Balzac

5. In existentialist thought, what is the 'existence precedes essence' concept trying to explain?

A) Humans define their own purpose
B) All people are born with a set job
C) Destiny controls every action
D) Nature determines our personality

6. Jean-Paul Sartre famously declined which prestigious award in 1964?

A) Nobel Prize in Literature
B) Academy Award
C) Pulitzer Prize
D) Knight of the Legion of Honour

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7. Which major global conflict helped popularize existentialist ideas in the mid-20th century?

A) World War II
B) The American Civil War
C) The Hundred Years' War
D) The Napoleonic Wars

8. Simone de Beauvoir, a major existentialist philosopher, wrote which influential book about women's rights?

A) The Second Sex
B) Pride and Prejudice
C) Jane Eyre
D) Emma

9. Which German philosopher's concept of the 'Death of God' influenced many existentialist thinkers?

A) Friedrich Nietzsche
B) Karl Marx
C) Immanuel Kant
D) Georg Hegel

10. Existentialism is most strongly associated with which country's intellectual culture in the 1940s?

A) France
B) Japan
C) Brazil
D) Canada

11. What is the common term used in existentialism to describe the feeling of deep unease or dread about existence?

A) Angst
B) Euphoria
C) Boredom
D) Laziness

12. Which existentialist thinker was also a leader in the French Resistance during WWII?

A) Albert Camus
B) Thomas Aquinas
C) David Hume
D) Francis Bacon

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13. Friedrich Nietzsche's idea of the 'Übermensch' is often translated into English as what?

A) Overman or Superman
B) The Wise Teacher
C) The High Priest
D) The Golden King

14. Existentialism encourages people to be authentic, which means what?

A) Being true to oneself
B) Following the crowd
C) Copying famous people
D) Obeying laws without question

15. Which of these was a common setting for existentialist literature and plays?

A) Cafés and cities
B) Space stations
C) Fantasy forests
D) Underwater kingdoms

16. Martin Heidegger was a German philosopher who contributed to existentialism through which famous book?

A) Being and Time
B) The Republic
C) Critique of Pure Reason
D) Meditations

17. What does the term 'facticity' refer to in existential philosophy?

A) The fixed circumstances of one's life
B) The ability to fly
C) The study of plants
D) The rules of grammar

18. Existentialists often focus on 'responsibility,' which means what?

A) Owning the consequences of one's choices
B) Asking others for permission
C) Ignoring social rules
D) Living in the past

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19. The existentialist movement was a reaction against which traditional view?

A) Strict, pre-determined life paths
B) The study of science
C) The development of democracy
D) The importance of literacy

20. Which French existentialist philosopher was a partner to Simone de Beauvoir?

A) Jean-Paul Sartre
B) Albert Camus
C) Maurice Merleau-Ponty
D) Blaise Pascal

21. Existentialists believe that because there is no 'manual' for life, humans must do what?

A) Create their own meaning
B) Follow the stars
C) Wait for instructions
D) Accept bad luck

22. Albert Camus' essay 'The Myth of Sisyphus' discusses the concept of what?

A) The Absurd
B) The Solar System
C) The History of Art
D) The Laws of Physics

23. Existentialism is often viewed as a philosophy of what?

A) Personal action
B) Mathematical calculation
C) Chemical reaction
D) Political campaigning

24. Søren Kierkegaard wrote extensively about the importance of what in human life?

A) Subjective experience
B) Standardized testing
C) Global trade
D) Automatic responses

25. Which of these is a central theme explored by almost all existentialist philosophers?

A) Human freedom

B) The origin of gravity

C) The mating habits of birds

D) The construction of buildings