**Extended Reading – General English**

Read this review of Albert Camus’ *The Plague* (*Die Pest*), then answer the questions.

1. What is everyday life like as the reviewer waits for the pandemic to arrive in New York?
2. According to the reviewer, what are the topics from the Postwar era that are topical today? What makes them so?
3. Camus holds up a mirror to the society of his time. In his work, *The Plague*, how does the population react as the first signs of the disease appear? Are there any similarities to our current outbreak?
4. What are the escalation stages of the pandemic?
5. What does the reviewer say is the deeper meaning of Camus’ work? What are your thoughts based on this book review?
6. Do you think we can learn from past mistakes? What are your hopes for a positive outcome?

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| 1 | In my self-isolating household in upstate New York, the pandemic has so far produced boredom eating, boredom watching, hiking, candlelight dinners and, later in the evening, some reading out loud. We are living in the vacuum before the storm. A friend emails from the Bay Area to say she’s baked her first loaf of bread; another writes from Australia to say that this epidemic will be “a giant mirror held up to everyone.” A neighbor walking his dog calls "hello!" from across the fence. He doesn’t dare come closer, but he has something he wants to say: “Perhaps this will be a Great Reset.” |
| 2 | The last time the globe experienced a huge, simultaneous, nearly universal reset was immediately after World War II. In the relatively brief period of time between Hiroshima and the dawn of the welfare state, two writers produced two masterpieces of political introspection. In the aftermath of Trump’s victory, readers seized for obvious reasons, on one of these, Orwell’s “1984.” Now, understandably, they’re reaching for the other – the 1947 novel “The Plague,” by Albert Camus.  |
| 3 | In a commercial port in Algiers, a disease appears, as if from nowhere. It begins inconspicuously, with the appearance of a few disordered rats, then works its way virulently through the human population, aided by indifference, hypocrisy and laziness. Shops close, streets empty. But the infection picks up steam, spreading according to a geometric progression, producing a steeply rising “death graph.” The city is quarantined, but inside its walls there is a shortage of medical staff and lifesaving equipment and, yes, a controversy over whether masks are useless. |
| 4 | At first, the epidemic, like all catastrophes, confirms what everyone believes — that it will kill our enemies while sparing us. The public cycles through moods: denial, dread, panic; then piety, followed by abandon. Eventually, the town lapses into collective hopelessness with one exception: the privileged few, with money to burn. |
| 5 | By writing about an infectious disease, Camus was emphasizing the relative unimportance, to him, of the motivations of an evil enemy. Evil lies, like the microbe, beyond reason. But that’s the easy part. The hard part is: What are my own reasons? Why do I fight, and for what and whom? |

Extract and rewrite from
Stephen Metcalf, “Albert Camus’ ‘The Plague’ and our own Great Reset,” Los Angeles Times, 23 March 2020

<https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/books/story/2020-03-23/reading-camu-the-plague-amid-coronavirus>

**Vocabulary**

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| 1 | self-isolate – *sich abschotten*boredom – *Langeweile*loaf – *Laib*fence – *Zaun*reset – *zurücksetzen* |
| 2 | brief – *kurz*dawn – *Morgendämmerung*seize on – *greifen nach, festhalten an*reach for – *greifen nach*  |
| 3 | as if – *als ob*inconspicuously – *unauffällig*disordered – *unorganisiert*virulently – *virulent*indifference – *Gleichgültigkeit*hypocrisy – *Heuchelei*pick up steam – S*chwung aufnehmen*shortage – *Mangel*controversy – K*ontroverse* |
| 4 | epidemic – *Epidemie*catastrophe /*kəˈtæstrəfi/ – Katastrophe*spare so. – *jmd. verschonen*cycle (v.) – z*yklisch durchlaufen*denial – *Verleugnung*dread – *Furcht*piety – *Pietät*abandon (n) – V*erwahrlosung*lapse into – *verfallen*money to burn – *Geld im Überfluss*  |
| 5 | infectious disease – *Infektionskrankheit*emphasize – *betonen*enemy – *Feind*beyond – *jenseits*reason – *Vernunft*reason(s) *– Begründung* |