

# Camus' Touching Letter to Teacher After Receiving Nobel Prize

Albert Camus grew up knowing he wanted to be a writer. He became one of the best—perhaps because of the interest and affection of one great teacher.

[Born in 1913 in Algeria to poor French parents](#), Camus got the opportunity to study at a university in Algeria despite his humble upbringing. He began writing for the local newspaper—Alger Républicaine—but moved to Paris after the publication was banned. Camus published his first novel in 1937, but it was the work published five years later—[The Stranger](#)—that brought him international fame.

A deeply philosophical work that explored the absurdity of life and death through a series of events, [The Stranger](#) probed morality, randomness, and relativism like no author before him. The “[absurd](#)” novel drew the attention of philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, which no doubt attributed to the book's success.

In 1957, Camus received the Nobel Prize in Literature. Shortly after receiving his prize, he penned a short letter to his former teacher, Louis Germain. Here is what it said:

*19 November 1957*

*Dear Monsieur Germain,*

*I let the commotion around me these days subside a bit*

*before speaking to you from the bottom of my heart. I have just been given far too great an honor, one I neither sought nor solicited. But when I heard the news, my first thought, after my mother, was of you. Without you, without the affectionate hand you extended to the small poor child that I was, without your teaching and example, none of all this would have happened. I don't make too much of this sort of honor. But at least it gives me the opportunity to tell you what you have been and still are for me, and to assure you that your efforts, your work, and the generous heart you put into it still live in one of your little schoolboys who, despite the years, has never stopped being your grateful pupil. I embrace you with all my heart.*

*Albert Camus*

Little is known of Louis Germain, the teacher whose generosity and efforts apparently had a profound impact on Camus' life. But one scholar [had this to say](#): "One could argue that, in the history of the field, few teacher-pupil relationships have had more dramatic impact than that of Louis Germain on his young pupil Albert Camus."

Camus was killed in an auto accident in 1960. He was just 46 years old.

It's fortunate he was able to thank someone who had such a lasting impact on his life before that life was taken from him. How many people, I wonder, die with such dear sentiments left unsaid?

[H/T [Open Culture](#), [Letters of Note](#)]

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