**Preface Summary**

In November of 1954, the Algerian war is five years old. French colonialism still resists the Algerian people. According to Fanon, the revolution is seen as too violent, but it in truth is natural to react suddenly and violently to treachery and war crime.

Although the revolution is violent, it has not gone as far as colonialism has. Those who condemn the violent revolutionaries know nothing of the horrors inflicted upon the colonized. The colonizers have fed revolutionary brutality through centuries of oppression.

There was a seven-year-old boy who had been physically abused, and whose parents and sisters had been murdered in front of him. The child said: “There is only one thing I want: to be able to cut a French soldier up into small pieces, tiny pieces!” (26). According to Fanon, having some weapon to use against their oppressors is the only thing that give meaning to Algerians who have been brutally colonized. It is not due to an error in morality or a bitter attitude that Algerians feel they must resist violently.

**Preface Discussion**

What fascinates me about the preface is its rejection of an ideal morality. Fanon rejects the ideal of “turning the other cheek.” Instead, he characterizes violent revolution as the natural response to violent colonialism. In fact, he blames colonizers for the violent acts of the colonized. This picture also appears in Fanon’s other writing, *On Violence.* In both works, colonizers and colonized are two sides of the same coin. This idea abstractly involves a process. If oppression is the start of the process, a violent start, then revolution or decolonization is the next step (also violent in nature). Violence is enacted on one people and must be repaid by the oppressed onto the oppressors.

To me, it sounds wrong at first. I was raised to believe that violence is always wrong, which is exactly the idealized morality that Fanon rejects. Of course, it is easy to believe that when you have not experienced the same cruelties that the victims of colonization have. That’s why Fanon’s example of the seven-year-old boy is so effective. Can anyone blame him for wanting to take revenge? In this context, the ideal morality I was discussing becomes overshadowed. There is what I want to believe (in my imagination), and then there is the darkness of oppression (which really exists outside of my own head). Obviously, something that really exists holds infinitely more weight than something I simply want to be true.

However, ideal morality comes from a rational place. If one values human life, then it makes sense to value not taking revenge, no matter how oppressed one is. Then again, it is completely justified to take revenge, even if it is not “moral,” according to one’s standards. Maybe the lesson to take away from this is for those who do not have to face oppression to stay out of those who do face oppression’s way. To allow them to do what they need to do. Or maybe the lesson is for the unoppressed to take up arms and support the oppressed in whatever way is possible and necessary.

Discussion question: Say there were someone outside of the colonial process, who is not colonized or actively colonizing others. Should they get involved with the revolution of a culture they do not belong to, in order to quicken the decolonization process, or should they stay out of it and allow the colonized culture to use its own power to decolonize itself?

**Part 1 Summary**

*Note:* I chose not to discuss Part 1 because my discussion of the preface is already over 400 words. But I included the summary I wrote, just in case.

Fanon opens by discussing apparel’s usefulness in identifying somebody’s culture. For Algerians, a man’s clothing includes a fez and a turban, while a woman must wear a white veil, called a haïk. The man has some choice in what to wear while the woman has none. At the point in history when Fanon writes, France is and has been oppressing Algerians.

To the French, clothing was seen as an important and demarcating feature of Algerian culture. The most dramatic example of this is the woman’s haïk, and the French saw it as something to take advantage of. They formed a plan to destroy the Algerians’ matriarchal society by conquering the woman first. To do this, they planned to destroy the symbol of the haïk by saying it dehumanized the women who wore it. If the French could unveil the Algerian women, then the Algerian men would lose their motivation for revolution.

In the workplace, Europeans commonly criticized Algerian men for not allowing their wife to go out without the veil. Bosses will invite Algerian workers with their wives to the business. If the Algerian man accepts, he is “prostituting” his wife, and if he doesn’t, he may lose his job.

What is a distinct cultural identity to Algeria is seen as religious mania by Europe. France saw some success in unveiling Algerian women. When a women unveiled herself, society favored her and “…the authorities were strengthened in their conviction that the Algerian women would support Western penetration into the native society” (42).

This is how those Europeans directly involved in colonialism perceived the veil and its removal. But most average Europeans perceived the unveiling of Algerian women with fetishized eyes. They saw Algerian women, irrationally, as the beautiful queens of all women. They saw Algerian men as keeping their secret beauty from outsiders; thus, when women were unveiled, it was like breaking her resistance and receiving a prize for doing so.