

# Nausea

**Author: Jean-Paul Sartre**

Ah, *Nausea*. The literary equivalent to needing a therapist but not having one.

*Nausea* forces me to question whether knowledge for the sake of knowledge is a wise way to spend my life. Sartre argues a knowledge of trivial facts and a lack of self reflection is a life wasted.

*Nausea* speaks to me like the urge to binge watch all 108 Liam Neeson movies. Both surely end with a feeling of accomplishment, but also unleash floodgates of emptiness. Do I dare dedicate 9.81 days to Liam Neeson? Perhaps, but what follows emotionally would be horrific.

Sartre crafts *Nausea* as a series of journal entries written by Antoine Roquentin, the narrator and protagonist of the story. A former adventurer, Roquentin settles in the fictitious city of Bouville to finish an utterly riveting study on an 18th century politician. But during the winter of 1932, our hero is hopelessly imprisoned by a “sweetish sickness” of loneliness and time, what he refers to as “nausea”.

This nausea manifests itself into just about everything Roquentin enjoys: his studies, a close relationship with a local café owner, Francoise, his memories of his past lover, Anny, the beauty of the natural landscapes of Bouville, and the beloved company of a complete nerd who dedicates his time to reading all the books in the library alphabetically. Roquentin’s nausea endures like a swallowed piece of gum gone undigested. Even the feeling of his own flesh induces this nausea. It’s rapid impingement on Roquentin’s life makes me shiver in my timbers, curl up in a fetal position, and overthink simple tasks.

Despite finding a sense of solace in his time with others, Roquentin expresses boredom around those closest to him. Like my experiences with microeconomics, his interactions with others seem to only drain the life from him. Even though he has hella rizz, Roquentin doesn’t look forward to his time with his partner, Francoise. His relationship with her is purely sexual, and their conversations embody the awkwardness between two ex-lovers who unexpectedly encounter one another at a wedding reception. Roquentin’s condition doesn’t improve around his homeboy, either. When invited by the Self-Taught Man to lunch, Roquentin reluctantly agrees, only to write in his diary that “I had as much desire to eat with him as I had to hang myself.”

Roquentin’s nausea turns him into a sad e-boy who cannot for the love of God move on. When the feeling of nausea is potent, Roquentin is frequently overcome by an urge to contact his past lover, Anny. But when he finally does, he is bitch-slapped by disillusion, and seeing Anny acts as an OP XP boost for the nausea. He is eventually driven to believe he does not exist, and the nausea continues as a parasite, feeding on the mental torment of Roquentin and replacing his passion for research with the sentiment that his existence serves no purpose.

Sartre’s words are a dangerous combination of lethal and real, impeccably beautiful and descriptive, yet easy to understand. As Roquentin is overcome with the clusterfuck of despair, depression, anonymity, and dread, his diary entries are relatable. I can understand Roquentin, his absence of expectations or change in life, his feelings that the world is simply happening without him. In

these moments, I feel like the anti-drug posters that hang eternally from the walls of public middle school health classrooms. In these moments, I am merely existing.