

Six Themes in “The Metamorphosis” by Franz Kafka Preparing Students for Educational Theater of New York Performances Dominique DiTommaso

Resource:

- “The Metamorphosis” by Franz Kafka adapted by Dominique DiTommaso
- Spark Notes: <http://www.gradesaver.com/the-metamorphosis/>

Materials:

- “The Metamorphosis” - Chapters One, Two, and Three* - pgs. 7 - 25
- “Vocabulary Worksheet and Paragraph Summary” – pg. 26
- “Theme Paragraph Worksheet” – pgs. 27 - 30
- “Six Major Theme Definitions” Worksheet – pages 31 - 32
- Newsprint
- Markers
- Dictionaries (English to English)

***NB:** The adapted text for “The Metamorphosis” (pgs. 7 – 25) is divided into 18 paragraphs (A – R) for class use. You can divide the paragraphs in each chapter of the adapted text according to your own class size, so that each student gets one paragraph to read. Occasionally you will need to assign two students the same paragraph.

Topic:

Exploration of six themes of “The Metamorphosis”: economic effects on human relationships; family duty; alienation; freedom and escapism; guilt; personal identity.

Goals:

By the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- recognize the themes explored in the story
- define each theme and what it means in real terms
- discover which parts of the story illustrate which theme
- identify how each of these themes relates to their personal lives
- discuss these issues regarding their own lives and experiences
- write about a specific example of one of these themes from their own experience

Pre-Performance Activities:

Summarizing the Play through Reading and Vocabulary Work

The activities below were designed for students planning to attend the ETNY (Educational Theater of New York) performance of “The Metamorphosis”.

In the three weeks prior to the ETNY performance of “The Metamorphosis”, students read the adapted text and do the paragraph assignments below.

Three Weeks Before the Performance:

1. At the beginning of the week, introduce the students to “The Metamorphosis” and give them a little background. Since you have probably already discussed attending the play, remind the students about the upcoming performance they will see, and talk about how reading the play ahead of time will help them enjoy the performance, and give them a fuller understanding of the play. Explain that they will be working on vocabulary, as well as on themes from the play.
2. Assign each student in the class one paragraph from Chapter One of “The Metamorphosis” (pgs. 7 - 11).
3. Ask students to read their paragraph and then fill out the “Vocabulary Worksheet and Paragraph Summary” (pg. 25).*
4. At the end of the week, jigsaw the chapter together by sharing information from the “Vocabulary Worksheet and Paragraph Summary” and what each student discovered in their individual paragraphs.
5. Hang each completed “Vocabulary Worksheet and Paragraph Summary” on the wall in sequential order so that students can walk around and see what other students have written, and read the entire chapter.

Follow steps 2 - 5 for Chapter Two (Week Two) and Chapter Three (Week Three). Chapter Two is on pgs. 12 - 18; Chapter Three is on pgs. 19 – 25.

***NB:** Students receive a new “Vocabulary Worksheet and Paragraph Summary” (pg. 26) for each of the three chapter paragraphs they read. The worksheet asks students to:

- write down three new vocabulary words;
- summarize the paragraph they have read;
- create a picture of what happened in their paragraph.

Reviewing What “The Metamorphosis” is Really About

1. As a class, open a discussion of “The Metamorphosis” to talk about what we really think the story is about. Ask directed questions (below), and have students back up their answers with specific examples from the story.
 - What was Gregor’s relationship with his family?
 - Describe Gregor’s father/mother/sister/boss.
 - Was Gregor a happy man?
 - Did Gregor have a lot of friends and hobbies?
 - Did Gregor like his job?
 - How did Gregor feel about himself at the beginning/middle/end of the story?

After the three week preparation (above), students have enough background knowledge to attend the ETNY (Educational Theater of New York) performance of "The Metamorphosis". The lessons below can be done after attending the performance. I start with the review questions because some students' answers may have changed after seeing the performance.

Post-Performance Activities:

Reviewing What "The Metamorphosis" is Really About

Start the class with a review of what "The Metamorphosis" is really about. Since students are already familiar with the questions below (from the pre-performance discussion), revisiting the questions will give them a chance to reflect on their original ideas. They may want to change their original ideas, confirm them, or change them based on what they learned by attending the ETNY performance.

1. As a class, review the questions below. Have students back up their answers with specific examples from the story.
 - What was Gregor's relationship with his family?
 - Describe Gregor's father/mother/sister/boss.
 - Was Gregor a happy man?
 - Did Gregor have a lot of friends and hobbies?
 - Did Gregor like his job?
 - How did Gregor feel about himself at the beginning/middle/end of the story?

Introduction of Six Major Themes for "The Metamorphosis"

Materials:

- Chapters One and Two of "The Metamorphosis" – one for each group (pgs. 7 – 18)
 - "Theme Paragraph Worksheet" (pg. 26) – one for each group
 - There are no paragraphs from Chapter Three on the "Theme Paragraph" worksheet.
1. Introduce the six themes of "The Metamorphosis": economic effects on human relationships; family duty; alienation; freedom and escapism; guilt; personal identity. Discuss the ideas briefly. Alternatively, elicit "themes" from your students based on the discussion above and see what they come up with as themes.
 2. Write the themes on the board – or on newsprint – for students to refer to. Give the students a few minutes to say how the six themes fit the story. They may not have much to say at this point, or they may have a lot to say – either way they are building on their knowledge of the story and giving you feedback of what they know. If you have had students brainstorm themes, see how their ideas intersect with your themes.
 3. Create groups of threes. Give each group one copy of Chapter One and Chapter Two of "The Metamorphosis" text with the paragraph divisions (pgs. 7 - 18). Then give each group one copy of the "Theme Paragraph Worksheet" (pg. 26)).

4. Ask the group members to read each paragraph on the “Theme Paragraph Worksheet” and to look at the original text to find it in context. They should look for the missing word from the paragraph, and they should fill in the missing words.
5. After students have reviewed the text and filled in the missing words, they should then begin to explore which theme the paragraph illustrates.
6. Let students know that the missing word in paragraph on the “Theme Paragraph Worksheet” provides a clue to the theme. For example, the words “shame and sorrow” in Chapter Two, paragraph H, (the second example on “Theme Paragraph Worksheet”) speak to the theme of “guilt” or possibly “alienation” or “family duty”. It is up to the groups to categorize the paragraphs in the “Theme Paragraph Worksheet” as they see fit.
7. As students work, walk around and encourage them to discuss what rationale or proof they have for making their claim. In this activity they are just discussing their ideas. They will have a chance later to do writing and categorizing once they have more information.

Exploration of Six Major Themes of “The Metamorphosis”

Materials:

- Chapter Three of “The Metamorphosis” (pgs. 19 - 25)
 - “Theme Paragraph Worksheet” that groups filled out above
 - “Six Major Theme Definitions” worksheet cut into six parts/themes - (pgs. 31 – 32) one theme for each group
 - Dictionaries (one or more for each group)
1. Review the six themes from your discussion above. Tell students that they will be exploring these six themes in even more depth. Have students make six groups of about four or five people. Explain that each group will look at one theme in depth.
 2. Assign each group one of the six themes, and then give each group one of the theme definitions from “Six Major Theme Definitions” worksheet (pgs. 31 – 32).
 3. Ask students to read the definition and discuss the ideas with their group members. After they have discussed the meaning, students should then look up any unknown vocabulary words in the dictionaries provided. As they get more information, the group should work out the meaning of their theme together. They should also brainstorm synonyms, or look for them in the dictionary. This will help with the activity below. (See #7.)
 4. After some time with dictionaries and discussion in groups, let the students know they should come up with a one sentence definition for their theme. Give the students a few more minutes to do this.

5. Next, give each of the six groups a sheet of newsprint, and ask them to write their theme from “The Metamorphosis” at the top. They should also write their one sentence definition on the newsprint. Ask students to then organize a presentation: One student should present the theme definition; another student should give an example of that theme from the text; Students should then hand their newsprint on the wall.
6. The first group member will present the theme to the class using their group’s own definition, e.g. “Guilt is when you feel bad about something you did, or didn’t do, for someone.”
7. The second group member will share an example from the story of that theme, e.g., “When Gregor saw that Grete worked all day and then came in to take care of him, he felt guilty.”
8. The third group member will ask the class for synonyms for the theme to further illustrate the meaning. The student writes the synonyms on the newsprint. Some examples of possible synonyms for the themes could include:
 - Guilt: feeling bad, blame, fault
 - Alienation: feeling separate, disconnected, alone
 - Family Duty: responsibility, obligation
 - Personal Identity: Who I am, individuality, character
 - Freedom and Escapism: pastime, fantasy, diversion
 - Economic Effects on Human Relationships: breadwinner/dependent, employee/employer
9. After each of the groups has presented, have students go back to the “Theme Paragraph Worksheet” that they worked on above. Ask them to find a partner, and to review with the partner all the quotes and the missing words. After the pair has done a review, assign themes to each pair, and ask them to work together to find the quotations that fit their theme. The pair should write down their answers to share with others.
10. After the first pair has made their choices, ask them to share with another pair with the same theme, creating groups of four. Give the groups of four time to compare their choices. Since there are some crossovers, students should defend their choices by giving proof and examples from the text.
11. Ask students to remain in their groups as you go over answers as a class. Do we agree? Disagree? What are the other possible answers for this quotation? (There are no wrong answers here – majority decides).
12. After the above discussion, have each group of four go through Chapter Three (pgs. 19 – 25) of the story together. This will be new information because the previous quotations were all taken from Chapters One and Two. Students should find more examples of their theme and write those examples on paper, noting the chapter (Chapter Three) and the paragraph letter (Paragraph H).

13. Have each group present their Chapter Three examples to the class. Reach a consensus as to whether or not the quotations are an example of that theme.

Discussion of “The Metamorphosis” Relational Themes

1. Once the sheets are filled out, definitions have been understood and examples have been agreed upon, come back together as a class (sitting in a circle) and have students share individually an example of one of these themes that they recognize in their own lives. (Most students can find an example for every one of these universal themes!). The teacher can give an example from her own life first, e.g., “When I was in high school my family moved to a different state and I was far away from my friends so I felt lonely and alienated...”

Pre-Assignment for Future Writing Project

1. After sharing examples from their own lives, let students know that they are going to do some writing. Ask students to choose the theme that is most relevant to them. Make sure there are at least two students per theme (the last ones to choose get assigned!).
2. Have students sit in groups based on the theme they have chosen. In the group, they should share a personal experience that exemplifies that theme. Encourage students to ask questions about the story to draw out more details.
3. Once students have had a chance to relay their story to their group and discuss the details, have each student write, on his/her own, a paragraph about the story they just shared with their group.
4. After writing, have students regroup. They should read each other’s papers and offer suggestions for where they want more information, and ask questions about what is not clear in the writing.
5. Collect the papers to correct. Let students know that they will continue to work on their writing, and that this paragraph (rough draft) will become a full one-page paper that: defines their theme, gives an example from “The Metamorphosis” of that theme, and tells their own story that illustrates that theme.

“The Metamorphosis” by Franz Kafka
(As adapted by Dominique DiTommaso)
Chapter One

A. Gregor Samsa woke up one morning and found himself in bed, changed into a giant insect. He lay on his hard, armored back, and saw, as he raised his head a little, his brown belly. His numerous legs, very thin in comparison to his new width, waved helplessly. “What has happened to me?” he thought. It wasn’t a dream. He recognized his small room. Above the table, where stacks of cloth samples were (Gregor was a traveling textile salesman) hung the picture which he had cut out of a magazine and put in a pretty gold frame. It showed a beautiful woman in a fur hat, scarf and muff. Gregor then turned to the window and the dreary weather that made him melancholy. “How would it be if I kept sleeping for a little while longer and forgot all this nonsense,” he thought. But Gregor was used to sleeping on his right side, and in his present state, he couldn’t roll over into that position. No matter how hard he tried, he always rolled onto his back again.

B. “Oh God,” he thought, “what an exhausting job I’ve chosen! I’m on the road, day in and day out. The stress of the job is much greater than if I were working locally, and traveling is so inconvenient because of the worries about train connections, bad meals, and making acquaintances, but no friends. Also, getting up so early makes a person crazy. A man must have his sleep. Other salesmen party all the time. If I did that my boss, would fire me on the spot. Maybe that wouldn’t be such a bad thing. If it weren’t for my parents’ debt, I’d have quit a long time ago. I would’ve gone to the boss and told him exactly what I think of him. He would’ve fallen right off his desk! He’s a bully who sits up on that high desk and speaks down to the employees. Anyway, hope is not completely gone, after I’ve collected the money to pay off my parents’ debt to him - that should take another five or six years - I’ll definitely quit. Anyway, right now I have to get up; my train leaves at five o’clock.”

C. He saw the alarm clock ticking on the dresser. It was half past six. Shouldn’t the alarm have gone off? He was so late. Even if he caught the 7 o’clock train, there was no way to avoid the abuse he would get from the boss. What if he called in sick? But that would be extremely embarrassing and suspicious, because during his five years’ service, Gregor hadn’t been sick once. The boss would definitely tell his parents that their son was lazy and afraid of hard work. But Gregor wasn’t sick. In fact, besides being very tired, he felt quite well and even had an especially strong appetite. Then he heard a knock on the door. “Gregor,” a voice called - it was mother. “It’s quarter to seven. Don’t you want to be on your way?” “Yes, yes, thank you mother. I’m getting up now.” Gregor said, but he was surprised by his own voice. It was his, but in it was mixed with a painful squeaking, which distorted his words. Luckily, because of the wooden door, the change in Gregor’s voice was not really noticeable outside, so his mother left. However, as a result of the short conversation, the other family members became aware that Gregor was still at home, and already his father was knocking on one side door with his fist. “Gregor, Gregor,” he called out. “What’s going on?” On the other side door, however, his sister knocked lightly. “Gregor? Are you not well? Do you need anything?” Gregor answered them both at once: “I’m almost done.” It was very hard for him to speak clearly. His father went back to his breakfast. He liked to spend all morning eating and reading the newspaper. But Gregor’s sister whispered,

“Gregor, open the door—I beg you.” Gregor had no intention of opening the door, but was glad that habit, acquired he had formed a habit, from traveling, of locking all doors at night, even at home.

D. Maybe the change in his voice was nothing more a cold. First, he wanted to get out of bed, get dressed and have breakfast, then he could think about what to do next. But getting up was difficult. Part of the problem was he was so wide. He needed arms and hands to push himself upright. But instead these, he had only a lot of little legs, which kept moving and he was unable to control them. “But I can’t stay in bed doing nothing,” said Gregor to himself.

E. At seven-thirty there was a ring at the door of the apartment. “That’s someone from the office,” he told himself, and his small legs only danced around faster. For a short time, everything was quiet. “They aren’t opening it,” Gregor said to himself, hoping this was true. But then, he heard the maid’s heavy steps and then he heard the front door open. Gregor needed to hear only the first word of the visitor’s greeting to recognize immediately who it was—the company’s head clerk himself. Why was Gregor the only one unlucky enough to work at a company where, at the slightest error, someone immediately attracted the greatest suspicion? Were all the employees considered slackers? Was such interrogation necessary? As a consequence of the excited state in which this idea put Gregor than as a result of an actual decision, he swung himself with all his might out of the bed. There was a loud thud as he hit the carpet.

F. “Something has fallen in there,” he heard the head clerk say. Gregor could hear his sister whispering to him: “Gregor, the head clerk is here.” “I know,” said Gregor to himself; but he did not raise his voice loud enough so that his sister could hear. “Gregor,” his father now said from the neighboring room on the left, “the head clerk has come and is asking why you did not leave on the early train. We don’t know what we should tell him. Besides, he also wants to speak to you personally, so please open the door. He will certainly be nice enough to forgive your messy room.”

G. In the middle of all this, the head clerk called out in a friendly way, “Good morning, Mr. Samsa.” “He is not well,” said his mother to the head clerk, while his father was still talking at the door. “He is not well, sir, believe me, otherwise, how would he miss a train?! The boy has nothing in his head except business. He never goes out at night. He sits here at home and quietly reads the newspaper or studies his travel schedules.” “I’m coming right away,” said Gregor slowly and carefully; he didn’t move, so as not to miss one word of the conversation. “I hope it is nothing serious,” said the head clerk, “on the other hand, we business people simply have to overcome a minor illness for business concerns.” “So can the nice head clerk come in to see you now?” asked the impatient father as he knocked once again on the door. “No,” said Gregor.

H. His sister began to cry. But why was she crying? - Because he wasn't getting up and wasn't letting the head clerk in? Because he was in danger of losing his position, and because then his boss would harass his parents again with the debt that they owed him? At this point, those worries were completely unnecessary. Gregor was still here and wasn't thinking at all about deserting his family. At the moment, he was lying right there on the carpet, and no one who knew about his condition would've seriously requested that he let the head clerk in. But because of this minor rudeness, for which he would easily find a suitable excuse later, Gregor could not be immediately fired. It seemed to Gregor that it might be far more reasonable to leave him in peace at the moment instead of disturbing him with crying and begging. But it was that very uncertainty that distressed the others and excused their behavior.

I. "Mr. Samsa," called out the head clerk with a raised voice, "what's the matter? You are locking yourself in your room, answering with a simple 'yes' or 'no', making serious and unnecessary troubles for your parents, and neglecting your professional duties. I am asking you for an immediate, clear explanation. I am amazed; I thought I knew you as a calm, reasonable person, and now you seem moody. The supervisor mentioned to me earlier today a possible explanation for your behavior; there is some cash missing from the office and your position is certainly not the most secure one. You haven't been making many sales lately."

J. "But, sir," called Gregor, feeling stressed, "I'm opening the door immediately, this very moment. A dizzy spell, has stopped me from getting up. I'm still in bed but I'm getting out right now. There is really no basis for the accusations that you are now leveling against me, and until now, nobody has mentioned a word of this to me. Perhaps you do not know about the latest orders that I shipped. Also, I'm leaving on my next trip on the eight o'clock train; the few hours of rest have helped me. Head clerk, sir, don't wait; I will be at the office soon; please tell the supervisor for me!"

K. While Gregor was saying this, he was trying to stand up. He actually wanted to open the door. He really wanted to let himself be seen by and to speak with the head clerk. He was eager to see what they would all say when they saw him. If they didn't react badly, then he would have no reason not to go into work. Then, he gave himself a final swing and stood upright, gained control over himself and kept quiet, for he could now hear the head clerk.

L. "Did you understand even a single word?" the head clerk asked the parents. "Is he making a fool of us?" "For God's sake," cried the mother, already in tears. "Perhaps he's very ill, and we're upsetting him. Grete! Grete!" she then cried out. "Mother?" called the sister from the room. "You must go to the doctor immediately. Gregor is sick. Hurry to the doctor. Have you heard Gregor speak yet?" "That was an animal's voice," said the head clerk with a voice that was remarkably quiet in comparison to the mother's screaming. "Anna! Anna!" yelled the father to the cook. "Get a locksmith right away!" The two young women ran immediately through the hall and pulled open the front door. No one heard the front door close at all; it was left wide open, as is customary in apartments where a huge tragedy has occurred.

M. Gregor, however, had become much calmer. All right, people did not understand his words any more, although they seemed clear enough to him, maybe because his ears had become used to them. But at least people now knew that things were not well with him and they were ready to help him; that made him feel good. He felt included once again in the circle of humanity and was expecting positive results from both the doctor and the locksmith. Meanwhile, the apartment had become completely quiet. Maybe his parents were sitting with the head clerk at the table whispering about him; perhaps they were all leaning against the door, eavesdropping.

N. Gregor threw himself against the door, held himself upright against it and tried to turn the key in the lock with his mouth. Unfortunately, it seemed that he had no teeth and didn't notice that he was hurting himself, because a brown liquid came out of his mouth, flowed over the key, and dripped onto the floor. "Just listen," said the head clerk in the next room; "he's turning the key." This really cheered Gregor up, but they all should have called out to him and encouraged him by yelling, "Come on, Gregor, good job, hold tight to that lock!" Imagining that all his efforts were being followed with suspense, he focused, with all the strength he had, on the lock. After each small movement of the key, he tried harder. When the bolt finally clicked, Gregor said to himself: "So I didn't need the locksmith," and he pushed himself against the door to open it.

O. Gregor moved carefully around the door so he didn't fall clumsily on his back at the entrance into the room. The head clerk was the first to see him and shouted "Oh!" and pressed his hand against his open mouth and walked slowly backwards. His mother took two steps towards Gregor and fainted. His father clenched his fist, showing a hostile expression, as if he wanted to push Gregor back into his room, then covered his eyes with his hands, and cried so hard that his body shook. At this point, Gregor did not take one step into the room, but leaned his body from the inside against the firmly bolted door, so that only half his body was visible, as well as his head, tilted sideways, with which he looked over at the others. On the wall directly opposite hung a photograph of Gregor from the time of his military service, when he was a lieutenant.

P. "Now," said Gregor, "I'll get dressed right away, pack up my fabric samples, and set off. You all want, me to go on my way? You see now, head clerk, sir, I am not lazy. Traveling is hard work, and I am happy to work. Where are you going, my dear head clerk, to the office? Really? Will you report everything truthfully? A person can be unable to work briefly, but that's when his company should remember and consider earlier achievements, so that, after the problems have been removed, the person will work that much harder. You know that I am indebted to the supervisor and I also have to support my parents and sister. I have a temporary problem, but I'll solve it, so don't make things more difficult for me than they already are. Defend me in the office! I know that people don't like traveling salesmen, but you should know that we are away from the office almost the entire year and can easily become victims of gossip and groundless complaints, that we find out about only when we're exhausted after finishing a trip. And now, at home where terrible things are happening to my body. Head clerk, sir, don't go away without saying one word to me letting me know that you think I'm at least partially right!"

Q. But during Gregor's speech, the head clerk kept inching his way towards the door without taking his eyes off Gregor. When he made it to the hall, he quickly turned and ran as though he were escaping a terrible fire. Gregor realized it was dangerous to let the head clerk leave afraid. Gregor could lose his job. His parents didn't understand this; they believed that he would be employed by this company for the rest of his life. But Gregor knew better. The head clerk must be stopped, calmed down and convinced; the future of Gregor and his family depended on it! If only sister had been there. She was clever and the head clerk would certainly listen to her. She'd have shut the door of the apartment and talked him out of his terror. But his sister wasn't even there and the head clerk was already gone. Gregor let go of the door and immediately fell down onto his many little legs. As soon as this happened he felt better than he had all morning. His numerous legs had a solid floor beneath them and they worked perfectly. But at that very moment his mother, awoke and cried out, "Help, for God's sake, help!" then she ran backwards into the table and the coffee pot fell to the floor.

R. Unfortunately, this all affected his father, who picked up the head clerk's cane, which he had left behind on a stool with his hat and jacket, and with his left hand picked up a newspaper from the table and attempted to drive Gregor back into his room by stamping his feet and swinging the cane and newspaper. None of Gregor's pleas helped because they weren't understood. No matter how humbly he hung his head, the father stamped more violently. Until now, Gregor had not had any practice going backwards - it really went very slowly and he feared a lethal blow from the cane in the father's hand. There was really nothing else left for Gregor to do but try to turn himself around as quickly as possible (although in reality, however, this was quite slow). Perhaps father noticed his good intentions, because he did not attack him as he did this, instead he helped Gregor turn around with the tip of the cane.

S. When he was finally lucky enough to get his head before the doorway, it became clear that Gregor's body was too wide to go through any further. He raised himself up in the doorway, scraping himself against the latch leaving ugly brown marks on the white door, but then he got stuck. He couldn't get himself through the doorway on his own and his little legs were twitching up in the air. Then his father came from behind and gave him a rough push, and Gregor fell, heavily bleeding, into his room. The door was slammed shut with the cane. It was finally silent.

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Chapter Two

A. Gregor woke up from his heavy sleep at dusk. Footsteps and a careful closing of the door had awakened him but he felt as if he had had plenty of rest and sleep for the first time in a long time. The glow of the streetlights outside shined on the room's ceiling, but down by Gregor it was dark. Slowly, he pushed himself to the door, still feeling awkwardly with his antennae, which he just now learned to appreciate, so that he could take a look at what was happening there. His left side hurt and he had a limp on his two rows of legs. Also, one little leg was severely injured during the morning's incidents and it dragged lifelessly behind.

He first noticed by the door what it was that had tempted him: it had been the smell of something edible. There stood a bowl filled with sweet milk in which floated small bits of white bread. He had almost laughed for joy because he was much more hungry than he had been that morning, and he immediately submerged his head into the milk almost up to his eyes. But he soon pulled his head back in disappointment, not only because eating was difficult with his delicate left side, but the milk, which was his favorite drink, and for this reason the sister had certainly prepared it, did not taste good to him at all, and so he pulled away from the bowl in disgust and crawled back to the middle of the room.

B. In the living room, as Gregor saw his father through the open door. He always read the newspaper in a loud voice to Gregor's mother and sister, but today, there was silence throughout the apartment, in spite of the fact that it was certainly not empty. "Such a quiet life the family leads," said Gregor to himself. As he stared into the darkness in front of him he felt a great pride in the fact that he had provided such a nice life in such a nice apartment for his parents and his sister. But what now, if all peace, all prosperity, all contentment should be brought to a frightening end? In order not to think these negative thoughts, Gregor, instead, began to move and crawled up and down in his room.

Once, during the long evening, the door opened slightly, then quickly closed again; someone may have needed to come in, but then had some doubts about it. Now, Gregor immediately stopped crawling near the door, determined to somehow bring in the hesitant visitor, or, at least, to discover who it is was. But now the door no longer opened, and Gregor waited in vain. Earlier, when the doors had been blocked, all of them had wanted to come in to him; now that he had opened the door no one came any more, and the key was now inserted from the outside of the door.

C. The light in the living room was first turned off late at night, and now it was easy to see that his parents and sister had stayed awake because he heard them tiptoeing away. Gregor knew that no one would come into his room any more until morning. He had a long time to think about how he should put his life in order again. But the room started to make him nervous, and he didn't understand why, because this had been his own room for the past five years. Feeling a little shame, he hurried under the couch. Despite the fact that his back was a little scrunched and he could no longer raise his head, he felt very cozy under there and regretted only that his body was too wide to fit fully underneath the couch. He remained there the whole night, part of which he spent dozing, but always waking because of his hunger. Part of the night he spent worrying about his family and the troubles that in his present state has caused them. He decided that he would have to be quiet for a while.

D. In the early morning Gregor had the opportunity to test the strength of the promise he had made to himself, because his sister opened the door to the room and looked inside. She did not find him right away, but as soon as she noticed him under the couch she was so shocked that, without being able to control herself, she shut the door again from the outside. But she regretted her behavior and immediately opened the door again and tiptoed inside, as she would near a seriously ill person or even a stranger. Gregor had pushed his head forward, right to the edge of the couch and watched her. He wondered if she would realize that he had not drunk the milk, not because he wasn't hungry, but because he didn't like it. Would she bring in another dish that was more suitable for him? If she didn't do it herself, he would rather starve than complain, even though he really wanted to run out from under the couch, throw himself at his sister's feet, and beg her to bring anything that was good to eat.

E. The sister immediately noticed that the bowl was still full. She lifted it up, but not with her hands, but with a rag, and carried it out of the room. Gregor was especially curious about what she would bring in its place, and he thought up various ideas about it. However, he could have never guessed what his sister, out of the kindness of her heart, actually did. She brought him an entire smorgasbord in order to investigate his tastes, all of it spread out on an old newspaper. There were old, half-rotted vegetables, bones from the evening meal, a few raisins and almonds, a piece of old cheese and a stale piece of bread with butter smeared on it. In addition to all of this, she also put down a bowl of water. And, knowing that Gregor would not eat in front of her, she hurried away, even turning the key in the lock so that Gregor would know that he might make himself comfortable.

As tears of satisfaction came to his eyes, he quickly ate the cheese and vegetables. In contrast, the fresh foods didn't taste good to him at all; he didn't like the smell and dragged the things that he wanted to eat a bit further away. Long after he had finished eating his sister turned the key slowly in the lock. This startled him and he hurried underneath the sofa. But it required a great amount of will power to remain under the couch, even during the short time during that his sister was in the room, because his body had become a bit round from all of food that he ate, and he could hardly breathe in the narrow space. He watched as his sister used a broom to sweep into a bucket, not just the leftovers but also the food that Gregor had hardly touched, as if these were not usable any more. She closed the wooden lid and then carried it all out of the room.

F. Gregor couldn't find what excuses they used to send the doctor and locksmith away that first morning, because wasn't understood by the others, not even sister. Furthermore, nobody thought that he could understand them, and so when the sister was in his room, he had to be content hearing her sighs and prayers. Only later, did Gregor sometimes manage to hear comments that were meant in a friendly way or could be so construed. "But today, it tasted good to him," she said when Gregor had eaten all of his the food. In the opposite situation she was in the habit of sadly saying, "Now he stopped eating again."

Gregor was never spoken to directly, but he did overhear some things that his family said in the next room. When he heard them speaking he would run immediately to the door and press against it with his whole body. For two entire days there were discussions at every meal about what they should do about him. There were always at least two family members at home. Nobody really wanted to stay alone in the apartment with him, but they didn't want to leave him alone either. On that first day, the maid fell to her knees and begged the mother to fire her immediately, and when she said goodbye, she thanked mother for the dismissal with tears, as if it were the greatest favor that anybody had done for her, and, without anyone requesting it of her, and even swore never to tell anyone the anything about what was happening in that apartment. Now, the sister and mother had to cook, but this was not a lot of trouble because they hardly ate anything.

G. On the first day, his father explained the family's financial situation to Gregor's mother and sister. He stood up from the table and took some accounting book out of a small lockbox, saved from his business that went bankrupt five years ago. Gregor heard him say that, in spite of all bad luck, he still had a very small fortune from the old times. In addition, the money that Gregor had brought home every month (since he had only kept a few dollars for himself) had not been completely used up and had been saved to become quite a bit of money. Gregor was behind his door, delighted at this unexpected event. He would have actually preferred it if they could have further paid off his father's debt to the boss with this extra money so that he could quit his job, but things were undoubtedly better the way his father had set them up.

He thought that his father had nothing at all left from his former business. Gregor's only concern had been to do everything in his power to allow his family to forget, as quickly as possible, the bad business luck that had brought them to complete despair. And since that time, he had begun to work hard, going almost overnight from being a minor clerk to a traveling salesman. Being a salesman there were a lot of other possibilities for earning money because received cash commissions that could be laid on the table at home before his surprised and delighted family.

H. Gregor later earned so much money that he was capable of bearing the expenses of the entire family. They had become quite used to it, they accepted the money gratefully, and he gladly handed it over, but after a while, it wasn't appreciated, but expected. Only the sister still remained close to Gregor, and his secret plan was to send her, who loved music and knew how to play the violin wonderfully, to the conservatory next year. Even though it was very expensive. Gregor was going to reveal his plans on Christmas Eve.

Right now, however, this money that the father saved could only support the family for two years at the most, but no more. It was simply a sum that to be put aside for an emergency; the money to live on had to be earned. Gregor's father was quite a healthy man who hadn't worked at all for five years and couldn't be relied upon too much. His mother never earned money. She suffered from asthma, and a walk through the apartment was hard for her, so she spent every other day on the sofa under an open window because of breathing trouble. And his sister was still a child of seventeen, whose way of life up to this point consisted of dressing herself nicely, sleeping late, helping with household matters, enjoying in a few hobbies, and above all playing the violin. When his family talked about earning money, Gregor ran from the door and threw himself on the cool leather sofa near the door, because he was very hot with shame and sorrow.

I. Gregor often lay there all night long, not sleeping a wink and scratching at the leather for hours. Sometimes he climbed onto an armchair near the window, and crawled up to the windowsill and looked out the window. He obviously remembered some of the freedom he enjoyed before. His eyesight was starting to become blurry. He could no longer see the hospital across the way, and if he hadn't known for sure that he lived on very urban Charlotte Street, he could have believed that his window overlooked a wilderness in which the gray heavens met the gray earth with no color at all.

J. Gregor wished he could speak to his sister and thank her for everything that she was doing for him. That would have made it easier to accept her service because he felt guilty about how much extra work he was causing her. Her entrance into the room was already terrible for him. She stepped into the room without taking time to shut the door, ran directly to the window, quickly pushed it open, almost as if she were suffocating, and remained there breathing deeply for a little while. With this running and noise, she startled Gregor twice a day; the entire time, he trembled under the couch and knew that she would gladly have spared him all this if it had only been possible to stay with closed windows in a room where Gregor lived.

K. A full month had already gone by since Gregor's transformation. Once, his sister entered his room a little earlier than usual while Gregor was still looking out the window. When she saw him on the windowsill she ran out of the room immediately and shut the door behind her. A stranger would have thought that Gregor had been lying in wait there and had wanted to bite her. Gregor had immediately hid himself under the couch, ashamed at how he made his sister feel, but he had to wait until midday before she returned, and she seemed much more nervous than usual. He realized from this that the sight of him was now difficult for her and that she would have to force herself not to run away from even the small part of his body that stuck out from underneath the

couch. In order to spare her even this sight, he dragged the bed sheet onto his back so he was now completely hidden, and his sister couldn't see him, even when she bent down.

After a while, Gregor started crawling back and forth across the walls and ceiling. He especially liked hanging up on the ceiling; it was much different from lying on the floor. He could breathe more freely. His sister noticed immediately the new entertainment that Gregor had found for himself because he left behind traces of his adhesive when he crept here and there. So she got the idea of making Gregor's crawling as easy as possible by getting rid of the furniture that was in his way, especially the chest of drawers and the desk. She couldn't do this herself, however, and she didn't dare ask the father for help. The maid would certainly not have helped her. The almost sixteen-year-old girl begged to stay only in the kitchen, opening the door only when specifically called. So his sister had no choice except to ask the mother one time while the father was away. Gregor pulled the sheet him and resisted looking out from under the sheet. He didn't see his mother, but was just happy that she had come.

L. "Come on; you can't see him," said the sister, and she led the mother by the hand. Gregor now listened as the two weak women managed to move the heavy, old chest of drawers from its place, and, how the whole time the sister took upon herself the greater part of the work without listening to the warnings of the mother, who feared that the sister was going to hurt herself. This lasted a long time. After a quarter-of-an-hour's work, the mother said that they should instead leave the chest of drawers right there because it was too heavy, and they would not be done before the father arrived. Also, she wasn't sure that Gregor wanted the furniture removed. For her, the sight of the empty walls depressed her, and why shouldn't Gregor also have this feeling, since he was used to the room's furniture?

"And don't you think," the mother asked very quietly, "that if we remove all of the furniture, he will think that we are giving up all hope of recovery? I believe that it would be best if kept the room in the exact condition that it was before, so that when Gregor returns to us again, he will find everything unchanged, and be able to forget this terrible experience."

M. Upon hearing the mother's words, Gregor realized that the lack of any direct human conversation, must have, confused him, because he could not otherwise explain to himself how he could have wished for his room to be emptied. Did he really desire to let the warm room, comfortably furnished with inherited furniture, be transformed into a cave in which he could then freely crawl in all directions without interference? Has he so quickly and completely forgotten his human past? Was he even now close to forgetting, and was it only the voice of the mother, long unheard, that had reminded him? Nothing should be removed; all must remain. If the furniture prevented him from his senseless crawling about, then that was no loss.

Unfortunately, his sister had another opinion. She had become used to speaking for what is best for Gregor. She had observed that Gregor actually needed a lot of room to crawl about, and the furniture, as far as she could see, was of no use to him. She argued for the removal of the chest of drawers and the desk. The mother listened to Grete because who besides her would ever dare even once to step into a room where Gregor was the sole ruler of the empty walls. All she left was the couch.

N. Gregor wasn't going to put up with all this any longer. They were clearing out his room, robbing him of everything that he held dear—they had already taken out the chest of drawers in which were all of his clothing. And now they were trying to move the desk, upon which he had written out his assignments as a student at the university, and even as a student in elementary school. So he came out when the women were out of the room taking a break. He really didn't know what he should save first; then he saw, hanging on the otherwise empty wall, the picture of the lady clothed in nothing but fur. He crawled quickly up the wall to it and pressed himself up against the glass and it felt good against his belly. At least nobody would take this picture that Gregor was completely covering up. He twisted his head towards the living room door so that he could watch the women as they returned.

O. "So, what will we take now?" said Grete as she looked around. Then her gaze met Gregor's on the wall. The mother's presence was truly the sole reason she kept her composure; she leaned her face down towards the mother in order to keep her from looking about, and said, although trembling and without thinking, "Come, wouldn't we rather go back to the living room for one more moment?" Grete's intent was clear to Gregor: she wanted to take the mother to safety and then chase him down off the wall. Now, she could just keep on trying! He was sitting on his picture and wasn't handing it over. He would rather jump in Grete's face.

But Grete's words had worried the mother; she stepped to the side, saw the giant brown mark on the flowered wallpaper, and, before she really came to the realization that it was Gregor she saw, she said in a shrieking voice, "Oh, God, oh, God!" and, with her arms wide, as if giving everything up, fell on the couch and didn't move. "Gregor, you..." cried the sister as she raised her fist and shot him an intense glare. These were the first words that she had addressed directly to him since the transformation. She ran into the next room to get some sort of medicine that could wake the mother from her faint; Gregor wanted to help as well—there was still time to save the picture—he was, however, stuck fast to the glass and had to forcefully tear himself away.

P. He then ran into the nearby living room, as if he could give the sister some sort of advice as he had done in the past. She was startled when she turned around; a medicine bottle dropped to the floor and shattered. A sliver of glass injured Gregor's face and some medicine spilled on him. Grete rushed in to the mother, shutting the door behind her. Gregor was now cut off from the mother, who was perhaps near death, and it was his fault. He didn't want to open the door and chase away the sister who had to stay with their mother. He now had nothing to do except wait and worry. He began to crawl. He crawled all over everything: walls, furniture, and ceilings, and when the whole room had just begun to spin around him, he finally fell, in his despair, onto the middle of the large table.

A little time went by as Gregor lay there weakly; everything around him was quiet; perhaps that was a good sign. Then the father had arrived. "What happened?" were his first words; Grete's appearance had really given everything away. Grete answered with a muffled voice, apparently with her face buried in the father's chest: "Mother fainted, but she's better now. Gregor has escaped." "Of course; I've expected that," said the father. "I've always told you that, but you women don't want to hear of it."

Q. It was clear to Gregor that Grete's explanation had been interpreted to mean that Gregor had done something vicious and violent. Therefore, Gregor would have to seek to pacify the father because he had neither time nor opportunity to explain. And so he fled to the door of his room and pushed on it, so that the father would see that Gregor had every intention of returning to his room at once, that driving him away was unnecessary, and that one needed only to open the door and he would promptly disappear.

But the father was not in the mood to give Gregor any credit. "Aha!" he cried. Gregor pulled his head back from the door and lifted it towards the father. He hadn't actually seen his father for weeks. Was this still father? The same man who had previously stayed in bed from fatigue while Gregor had went to work and on business trips? Who had greeted Gregor upon his return home at night sitting in an armchair in his pajamas? Who walked very slowly between Gregor and the mother during the walks they took together a few Sundays a year and on major holidays? When he wanted to say something, coming to an almost complete standstill and gathering speaking slowly?

R. Now, however, he was standing upright, dressed in a blue uniform with gold buttons like the ones servants in banks wore. Below his bushy eyebrows was a bright, alert, and penetrating gaze from his black eyes. The normally messy white hair was neatly combed down and parted. He flung his hat across the room onto the couch and went up to Gregor with a determined face and his hands in his pants pockets.

He really didn't know what his father was going to do, so Gregor stayed still for a while, especially as he feared that the father would think a flight up the walls or on the ceiling to be particularly malicious. While he was deciding what to do, something small rolled in front of him. It was an apple; a second one flew after it. Gregor stood still in terror as he realized that the father had decided to bombard him. He had taken fruit from the fruit bowl on the table and now, threw apple after apple at Gregor. One apple grazed Gregor's back but slid off harmlessly, but the next one penetrated Gregor's back, causing him unbelievable pain. He was completely confused. Then he saw the door of his room had been open and his mother ran out in front of his screaming sister and she ran to the father and threw her arms around him and begged him to spare Gregor's life.

The Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka
(As adapted by Dominique DiTommaso)
Chapter Three

A. The apple that his father threw at him during the frightening bombardment remained in Gregor's flesh since nobody tried to remove it. He suffered with his severe wound for over a month. It seemed to remind his father that Gregor, despite his present form, was a member of the family who he wasn't allowed to treat like an enemy. But instead he must be endured. And now if Gregor, because of his wound, had, probably forever, lost much of his mobility and, like an old invalid, currently needed many, many minutes to cross the room—crawling up onto the ceiling was unthinkable. Some conditions did improve, however. In the evenings the living room door would be opened so that he, lying in the darkness of his room, could see the entire family at the table and listen to their conversation, without being seen.

It was not the interesting discussions that Gregor imagined the family had when he was living out of small, lonely hotel rooms. The father fell asleep in his armchair immediately after dinner. His mother bent down under the light, sewing lingerie for a fashion designer. His sister, who had become a saleswoman, studied stenography and French in the evenings so that sometime later she could get a better position. Sometimes the father woke up and, as if he was unaware that he had slept, said to the mother, "My, you've already been sewing for such a long time!" Then he immediately fell asleep again and the mother and sister smiled at each other.

B. Gregor's father refused to take off his servant's uniform at home, so he slept fully clothed, as if he were always to serve and was waited for his boss's voice. Only when the two women grabbed him by the underarms would he open his eyes, and, supported by both women, he would allow himself to be led to the door of his bedroom. Who in this overworked and fatigued family had time to look after Gregor any more than was absolutely necessary? A new maid came in the mornings and evenings to do the hardest work; the mother took care of everything else, in addition to her regular sewing work. Many pieces of family jewelry, which the mother and the sister had joyously worn when they entertained company or on holidays, were sold, as Gregor found out during the general discussion in the evening about the price they had fetched. However, the biggest complaint was always that they could not leave this apartment, which was too large for their current income, because relocating Gregor was inconceivable. The wound in Gregor's back began to hurt worse when his mother and sister, after they had brought the father to bed, shut the door to his room, leaving Gregor again in the darkness.

C. Gregor spent the nights and days with hardly any sleep. Sometimes he thought that, the next time the door was opened, he would be able to take care his family again, as he once had. In his thoughts appeared, the boss and the head clerk, the superintendents and the apprentices, the janitor, two or three friends from other businesses, a cleaning maid at a hotel in the provinces, a fleeting and favorite memory about a saleswoman in a hat shop whom he briefly dated. He was happy when they disappeared from his mind.

But sometimes, he was hardly in the mood to care for his family, filled as he was with blind rage over their negligent care of him. Without giving any more thought to what Gregor would actually like to eat, the sister hurriedly shoved any old food she wanted into the room with her foot before she went to work in the morning. In the evening, not even noticing if the food had been tried or, as most often happened, completely untouched, with a swing of the broom, she swept it out. Cleaning out the room, which she now always did in the evening, she did very quickly. The walls were dirty and there were balls of dust and filth. At first, Gregor stayed in a corner of the room, so his sister could see the dirt in the room. But he could have stayed there all week long with no change in the sister's behavior; she saw the filth just as he did, but she had decided leave it alone.

One time the mother cleaned Gregor's room herself. But when the sister came home in the evening she ran into the living room and yelled at the mother. The father began to yell and told them both that neither one of them may ever clean Gregor's room again. Both women cried and made a lot of noise. Gregor hissed loudly in rage because it hadn't occurred to anyone to shut the door and spare him this scene.

D. But if the sister had cared for Gregor herself, the mother would not have had any need to enter and Gregor would not have been neglected. That's why the servant was now there. This old widow, who, had survived great troubles in her long life, had no particular aversion to Gregor. She happened to open the door of Gregor's room one time and caught a glimpse of him. He began to run to and fro while she just looked at him in surprise. Since then, she always opened the door a crack in the mornings and evenings and quickly looked in on Gregor. In the beginning she also called out to him with words that she probably thought were friendly, like, "C'mon over here, you old dung beetle!" or "Lookie here at the old dung beetle!" Upon being spoken to in such a manner, Gregor did not answer, but instead remained absolutely still. Why was his family allowing this woman to bother him instead of cleaning his room every day?

E. Gregor now ate almost nothing. Sometimes he would take a bite of food in his mouth, hold it there for hours, and then spit most of it out again. The family started putting things in this room that they couldn't put anywhere else, and there were now many such things in there because they had rented out a room of the apartment to three tenants. Whatever was useless at present, the servant, who was always in a great hurry, simply hurled it into Gregor's room. The items remained there where they had been thrown, except when Gregor wriggled through the junk pile and moved it because there was no longer any free space to crawl.

F. These stern gentlemen tenants (all three had full beards) sometimes also dinner with the family, the door to the room remained closed many evenings. Gregor just lay down in a dark corner of his room without the family noticing. One time, however, the servant had left the door to the living room open a little, and it remained open this far when the tenants entered in the evening and turned the lights on. They sat down at the head of the table, where in former times, the father, the mother, and Gregor had eaten, unfolded their napkins, and took knives and forks into their hands. The mother immediately appeared in the door with a dish of meat, and, behind her, the sister with a dish stacked high with potatoes. Heavy steam rose from the food. The tenants bent down over the dishes set before them as if they wanted to examine it before eating, and the one sitting in the middle actually cut a piece of meat on the plate to determine whether it was tender enough or whether something should be sent back to the kitchen. He was satisfied, and mother and sister, who had looked on in suspense, heaved a sigh of relief and smiled. The tenants ate in almost complete silence. As Gregor watched the tenants and family eat dinner he thought to himself, “ How these tenants nourish themselves while I pass away!”

G. On this same evening, Gregor heard the violin. He didn't recall having heard it during this whole time, but now, his sister was giving a concert for the tenants. Gregor, drawn by the playing, had risked coming forward a little bit more; his head was already in the living room. He hardly wondered at the fact that he had recently had so little consideration for the others. He would have had much more reason right now to hide himself, as the dust that lay over the whole of his room and which flew about at the slightest movement now covered him completely as well; he dragged threads, hair, and food scraps with him on his back and sides; he was far too indifferent about everything to lay on his back and rub himself on the carpet as he used to do multiple times during the day. In spite of these circumstances, he had no inhibitions about moving forward a little bit over the clean floor of the living room.

H. At first, nobody paid any attention to him. The family was completely engrossed by the violin playing; the tenants, on the other hand, who had placed themselves behind the music stand (far too close behind the sister) so that they could see all of the musical notes, must have disturbed the sister, and soon drew near the window, bowing their heads and speaking in low tones with one another, where they remained as the father anxiously observed them. It quite clearly appeared as if they were disappointed in the violin performance and had quite enough. The way that they all blew the smoke of their cigars up in the air out of their noses and mouths especially brought one to the conclusion that they were rather bored. Still, his sister was playing so beautifully. Her face was turned to the side, and her eyes was full of sadness, followed the lines of notes. Gregor crawled a little bit further forwards and held his head close to the floor in order to meet her gaze, if possible. Was he an animal, that music would so move him? It was as if the way to the unknown nourishment that he longed for was shown to him. He was determined to get close the sister, to tug at her skirts, and to express that he would like her to come into his room with her violin, as nobody here thought that her playing was worth their time. He did not want to let her out of his room, at least not as long as he lived. Maybe his terrifying form would for the first time be useful as he would hiss back at the attackers from all doors of his room at once. Yet the sister shouldn't be forced to stay with him, but instead, remain of her own free will. She could sit near him on the couch, bend her ear down to him, and he would then confide to her that he

had every intention of sending her to the conservatory and that, if this unfortunate event had not happened to him, he would have told her all this last Christmas—Christmas had already gone by?—without listening to any contrary arguments. After this news, the sister would cry, and Gregor would lift himself up to her shoulders and kiss her cheek.

I. “Mr. Samsa!” yelled one of the tenants as he pointed, without speaking another word, with his index finger at Gregor, who was moving himself slowly forward. The violin fell silent as the tenant in the middle smiled at his friends and, shaking his head once, looked at Gregor again. The father appeared to consider it more important to calm the tenants than to drive away Gregor, despite the fact that the tenants were hardly upset and that Gregor entertained them more than the violin performance. He hurried to them and tried to block their view of Gregor with his body. They were actually a little angry at this point, although one no longer knew whether it was due to the father’s behavior or whether it was the fact that they just now realized that they had a neighbor like Gregor in the next room. They requested explanations from the father, raised their hands, pulled at their beards in restlessness, and headed towards their rooms. “Because of these disgusting conditions,” said the tenant, “I am leaving immediately. Of course I will not pay even the least amount for the days I have lived here. As a matter of fact, I will think about suing you!” He then became silent and his two friends said: “We also immediately give our notice.” After that, the middle one grabbed the door handle and slammed the door shut.

J. Gregor had been lying still at the same spot where the tenants had caught him. He was too weak to move because of his disappointment over the fact that his plans had gone wrong. He was also weak, possibly as a result of his extreme hunger. He feared, in the next few moments, that it was positively certain that everything would flare up and collapse upon him, and he waited. He wasn’t even startled when the violin, held by the sister’s trembling hands, fell from her lap and sent out a sonorous tone.

“Dearest parents,” said the sister as she struck the table with her hand, “this can go no further. If you don’t recognize that, I do. I will not say the name of my brother in the presence of this monster, and will say merely this about it: we must be rid of it. We have attempted every method humanly possible to serve and tolerate it, and I believe that nobody can blame us in the least.” “She is a thousand times right,” said the father. The mother, who could never manage to catch her breath, said nothing. “We must try to get rid of it,” the sister said. “It’s causing you both stress, I can see it. If people have to work as hard as we all do, they can’t endure this endless torment at home as well. I can’t do it either.” Then she burst into tears. “Child,” said the father with compassion and obvious sympathy, “what then should we do?” The sister just shrugged her shoulders as a sign of the helplessness that, in contrast to her former sureness, had seized her while she cried.

“If he understood us,” said the father half-questioningly; the sister, in her tears, shook her hand fiercely to signify that this was unthinkable. “If he understood us,” repeated the father, who, by shutting his eyes, admitted to the sister’s conviction regarding the impossibility of the matter, “then it might be possible to come to an agreement with him.”

K. "He must be sent away," cried the sister; "that is the only way. You just have to try to erase the thought that it's Gregor. The fact that we have believed this for so long is our true misfortune. How can it really be Gregor? If it were Gregor, he would have long ago realized that it isn't possible for humans to live together with such a beast and would have gone away of his own free will. Then we would have had no brother, but would have lived our lives and honored his memory. But this animal persecutes us, drives away the tenants, and terrorizes us. See, father," she suddenly screamed, "he's starting again now!" And, with a horror that Gregor couldn't understand at all, the sister even abandoned the mother, suddenly pushing away from her chair as if she would rather sacrifice the mother than remain in Gregor's presence, and hurried behind the father, who, only worked up because of her behavior, also stood up and half-raised his arms as if to protect the sister.

But Gregor didn't mean to cause anxiety for anyone, let alone his sister. He had just started to turn himself around so that he could wander back into his room, and this actually looked quite strange, as he, in his wounded condition, had to facilitate his difficult rotation by raising and then dropping his head many times on the floor. He stopped and looked around. His good intentions seemed to have been recognized; the horror had only been temporary. Now they all silently and sorrowfully looked at him. The mother, with her legs crossed and stretched out in front of her, sat in her chair, with her eyes almost shut from exhaustion; the father and the sister sat near one another, with the sister having laid her hand around the father's neck.

L. "Now, maybe I'll be allowed to turn myself around," thought Gregor as he began his work once more. He couldn't stop his heavy breathing at the effort and had to rest now and then. In addition, nobody was helping him onwards; it was all left up to him. When he had finished turning around, he was amazed at the great distance separating him from his room, and he could hardly comprehend how he, in his weakness and almost without noticeable effort, had traced the same path only a short time ago. Concentrating the whole time on crawling quickly, he hardly paid attention to the fact that no word, no cry from his family disrupted him. He first turned his head when he was already in the door, although he didn't turn it fully because he felt his neck getting stiff; at any rate, he saw that even now nothing behind him had changed, except that the sister was standing up. He was hardly inside his room when the door was swiftly shut, bolted, and locked. Gregor was so startled at the sudden noise behind him that his little legs buckled. It was the sister who had hurried like that. She already stood upright and had then waited, quickly springing forward (Gregor hadn't even heard her coming), calling out "Finally!" to the parents while she turned the key in the lock.

M. "And now?" Gregor asked himself as he looked around in the darkness. He soon made the discovery that he could no longer move. He wasn't too surprised at this; it actually seemed unnatural to him that, until now, he could actually get around with these thin little legs. He started to feel rather comfortable. It was true that his whole body hurt, but it seemed to him as if the pains gradually grew slighter and slighter and that they would eventually go away completely. He now hardly felt the rotten apple in his back and the inflammation around it, which was now covered in soft dust. He remembered his family with affection and love. His opinion of it all, which was that he had to disappear, was even more resolute than his sister's, if such a thing were possible. He stayed in this state of peaceful thought until the clock tower struck the third hour of the morning. He lived to see the beginning of the early sunrise outside the window. Then, apart from his will, his head sank down completely, and his last breath streamed weakly out of his nostrils.

In the early morning the servant came and at her customary short visit with Gregor, at first, she didn't notice anything was wrong. She thought he was lying there pretending to play the insulted victim. Since she happened to have the long broom in hand, she tried to tickle Gregor with it from the doorway. When this also failed to produce results, she was annoyed and poked Gregor gently, and only when she had shoved him from his place without any movement did it catch her attention. When she soon recognized what had actually happened, her eyes grew large, she let out a low whistle, and, not waiting long, she tore open the door of the bedroom and called out in a loud voice into the darkness: "Everybody check it out, it croaked; there it lies, it's a stiff!"

N. Mr. and Mrs. Samsa climbed out of bed and they entered Gregor's room. In the meantime, the door of Grete's room was also opened. Grete was fully clothed as if she hadn't slept at all, a fact to which her pale face also seemed to prove. "Dead?" said Mrs. Samsa, and she cast a questioning look at the servant, in spite of the fact that she could still examine everything herself and could understand what had happened even without examination. "That's what I think," said the servant who, to prove it, shoved Gregor's body with the broom. Mrs. Samsa moved forward as if she wanted to stop the broom, but she didn't. "At last," said Mr. Samsa, "now we can thank God." He crossed himself, and the three women followed suit.

O. Grete, who hadn't taken her eyes off the corpse, said: "Just look at how emaciated he was. He hadn't eaten in such a long time. The food came out of here exactly as it had come in." Gregor's corpse was actually extremely flat and dry, and one really began to notice it only now because he wasn't raised on those little legs, and no other distractions existed.

"Come in here with us for a little while, Grete," said Mrs. Samsa with a melancholy smile, and Grete followed the parents into the bedroom, although not without looking back at the corpse. The servant shut the door and opened wide the window. Even though it was early morning, the air was fresh warm. It was already the end of March.

The three tenants stepped out of their room and looked in surprise for their breakfast; they had been forgotten. "Where is the breakfast?" the middle gentleman asked of the servant sullenly. She, however, put her finger to her lips and quickly and silently waved to the gentlemen that they should come in Gregor's room. They also came and stood, with their hands in the pockets of their jackets, around Gregor's corpse in the room that had already become bright.

P. Then the door of the bedroom opened and Mr. Samsa appeared in his livery; on one arm was his wife, and on the other, his daughter. They were all a little tear-stained; Grete hid her face from time to time on the father's arm. "Get out of my apartment immediately!" said Mr. Samsa as he pointed at the door without letting go of the women. "How exactly do you mean that?" said the one gentleman, somewhat shaken and smiling sweetly. "I mean it exactly as I have said it," answered Mr. Samsa. "Okay, we will go," the man said. At this, the gentleman immediately went to the hall; his two friends had already been listening for a while and now hopped directly after him, as if worried that Mr. Samsa could step into the hallway before they did and interfere when they joined up with their leader. All three of them took their hats from the coat rack in the hall, took their canes from the cane holder, bowed silently, and left the apartment.

Q. The family decided that day to spend time relaxing and going for a walk; not only had they earned this break from work, but they absolutely needed it. And so they sat at the table and wrote three letters of excuse, Mr. Samsa to his manager, Mrs. Samsa to her customer, and Grete to her supervisor at the store. While they were writing, the servant came in to say that she was leaving because her morning work was done. The three writers at first just nodded without looking up, and only when the servant would still not go away, did they look up in annoyance. "Well?" asked Mr. Samsa. The servant stood smiling in the doorway, as if she had something to announce but would do so only if she were specifically asked about it. "Well then, what is it you actually want?" asked Mrs. Samsa, whom the servant usually respected. "Okay, so, about that trash that needed to be gotten rid of, you don't worry about that. It's taken care of." The Samsas bent down over their letters and continued writing. "Goodbye folks," the maid said as she turned around and left the apartment with a violent slamming of the door. "She'll be fired this evening,"

R. The family rose, went to the window, and remained there with their arms around each other. Mr. Samsa then said: "Come now. Let's finally put aside the old things. And let's go and take a holiday in the city." Then all three of them left the apartment together (something that they had not done in months) and took the tram into the open air of the city. Warm sunshine filled the car in which they all sat. They discussed with one another their hopes for the future as they leaned back comfortably in their seats. As they talked they discovered that the employment of all three of them, which they had not previously asked each other about at all, was favorable and (especially in the future) looked very promising. The most notable immediate improvement of their situation be a change of apartments. They now wanted to take one that was smaller, cheaper, in a better location, and, most importantly, was more practical than their current one that had been chosen by Gregor. As they talked pleasantly about these things, it occurred to Mr. and Mrs. Samsa almost at the same time that their daughter, despite all the recent difficulties that had made her cheeks pale, was growing livelier all the time and had blossomed to become a beautiful young woman. They were thinking that it was soon going to be time to look for a worthy man for her.

Vocabulary Worksheet and Paragraph Summary

“The Metamorphosis” by Franz Kafka

Name _____

Date _____

Chapter _____ Paragraph _____

New Vocabulary Words

Part of Speech

Definition/Synonym/Example

Use a dictionary.

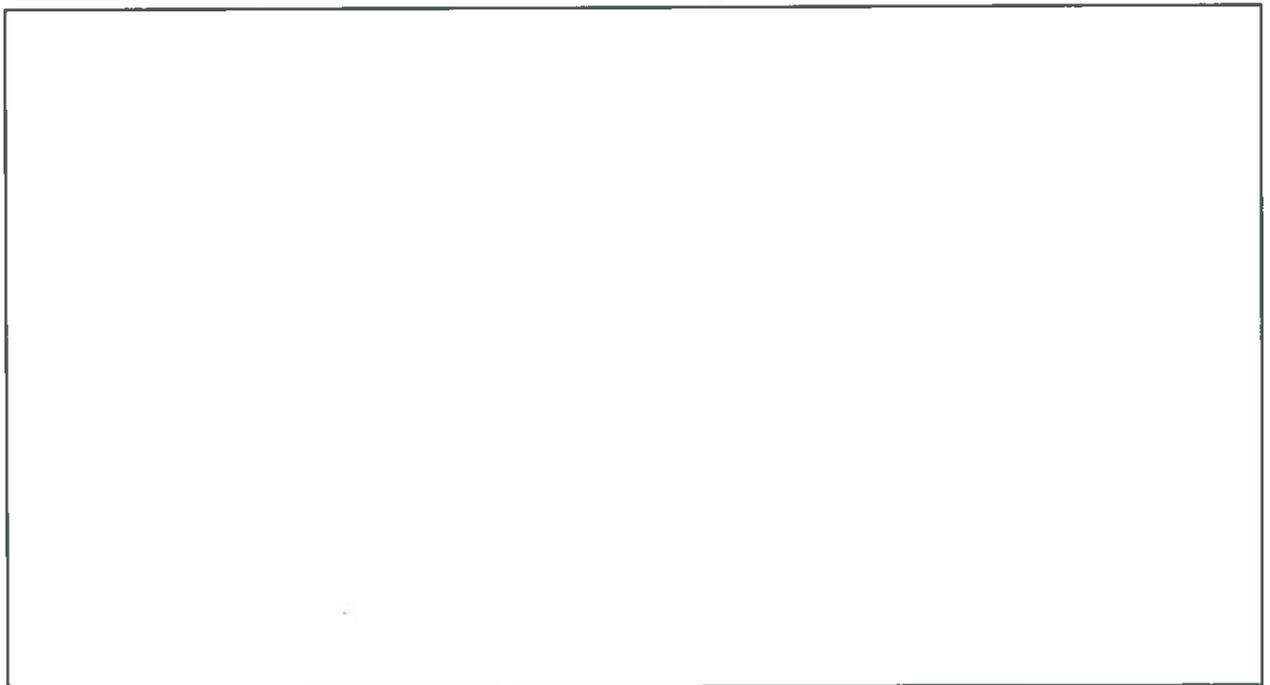
1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

A short summary of what happened in this paragraph.

An illustration (picture) of what happened in this paragraph



Theme Paragraph Worksheet
“The Metamorphosis” by Franz Kafka

“Part of the night he spent _____ about his family and the troubles that in his present state has caused them. He decided that he would have to be quiet for a while.” Chapter 2, Paragraph C

“When his family talked about earning money, Gregor ran from the door and threw himself on the cool leather sofa near the door, because he was very hot with _____ and sorrow.” Chapter 2, Paragraph H

“Gregor wished he could speak to his sister and thank her for everything that she was doing for him. That would have made it easier to accept her service because he felt _____ about how much extra work he was causing her.” Chapter 2, Paragraph J

“But now the door no longer opened, and Gregor waited in vain. Earlier, when the doors had been blocked, all of them had wanted to come in to him; now that he had opened the door no one _____ anymore, and the key was now inserted from the outside of the door.” Chapter 2, Paragraph B

“Did he really desire to let the warm room, comfortably furnished with inherited furniture, be transformed into a cave in which he could then freely crawl in all directions without interference? Has he so quickly and completely forgotten his human past? Was he even now close to _____, and was it only the voice of the mother, long unheard, that had reminded him?” Chapter 2, Paragraph N

“Grete rushed in to the mother, shutting the door behind her. Gregor was now _____ from the mother, who was perhaps near death, and it was his fault. He didn't want to open the door and chase away the sister who had to stay with their mother. He now had nothing to do except wait and worry.” Chapter 2, Paragraph P

“Above the table, where stacks of cloth samples were...hung the picture which he had cut out of a magazine and put in a pretty gold frame. It showed a _____ in a fur hat, scarf and muff.” Chapter 1, Paragraph A

“[Gregor] has nothing in his head except _____. He never goes out at night. He sits here at home and quietly reads the newspaper or studies his travel schedules.” Chapter 1, Paragraph G

“All right, people did not _____ his words any more, although they seemed clear enough to him, maybe because his ears had become used to them.” Chapter 1, Paragraph M

“On the wall directly opposite hung a photograph of Gregor from the time of his military service, when he was a _____.” Chapter 1, Paragraph O

“But the room started to make him nervous, and he didn’t understand why, because this had been his ____ room for the past five years.” Chapter 2, Paragraph C

“Sometimes he climbed onto an armchair near the window, and crawled up to the windowsill and looked out the window. He obviously remembered some of the _____ he enjoyed before.” Chapter 2, Paragraph I

“Once, his sister entered his room a little earlier than usual while Gregor was still looking out the window. When she saw him on the windowsill she ran out of the room immediately and shut the door behind her. A stranger would have thought that Gregor had been lying there waiting to _____ her.” Chapter 2, Paragraph K

“After a while, Gregor started crawling back and forth across the walls and ceiling. He especially liked hanging up on the ceiling; it was much different from lying on the floor. He could breathe more _____.” Chapter 2, Paragraph L

“...after I’ve collected the money to pay off my _____ debt to him - that should take another five or six years - I’ll definitely quit.” Chapter 1, Paragraph B

“You know that I am indebted to the supervisor and I also have to _____ my parents and sister. I have a temporary problem, but I’ll solve it, so don’t make things more difficult for me than they already are.” Chapter 1, Paragraph P

“Gregor wished he could speak to his sister and thank her for everything that she was doing for him. That would have made it easier to accept her _____ because he felt guilty about how much extra work he was causing her.” Chapter 2, Paragraph J

“[Grete] stepped into the room without taking time to shut the door, ran directly to the window, quickly pushed it open, almost as if she were _____, and remained there breathing deeply for a little while. With this running and noise, she startled Gregor twice a day...” Chapter 2, Paragraph J

“He was so late. Even if he caught the 7 o’clock train, there was no way to avoid the _____ he would get from the boss.” Chapter 1, Paragraph C

“Gregor later earned so much money that he was capable of bearing the expenses of the entire family. They had become quite used to it, they accepted the money gratefully, and he gladly handed it over, but after a while, it wasn’t appreciated, but _____.” Chapter 2, Paragraph H

“How would it be if I kept sleeping for a little while longer and _____ all this nonsense,” Gregor thought.” Chapter 1, Paragraph A

“But, sir,” called Gregor, feeling stressed, “I’m opening the door immediately, this very moment. A dizzy spell, has stopped me from getting up. I’m still in bed but I’m getting out _____...Head clerk, sir, don’t wait; I will be at the office soon; please tell the supervisor for me!” Chapter 1, Paragraph J

“Have you heard Gregor speak yet?” “That was an _____ voice,” said the head clerk...” Chapter 1, Paragraph L

“Gregor, however, had become much calmer. All right, people did not understand his words any more...But at least people now knew that things were not well with him and they were ready to _____ him. That made him feel good.” Chapter 1, Paragraph M

**“[The head clerk] said, ‘he’s turning the key.’ This really cheered Gregor up, but they all *should* have called out to him and encouraged him by yelling, “Come on, Gregor, good job, hold tight to that lock!” _____ that all his efforts were being followed with suspense, he focused, with all the strength he had, on the lock.”
Chapter 1, Paragraph N**

Six Major Theme Definitions

“The Metamorphosis” by Franz Kafka

Economic effects on human relationships -----

----- (In the beginning of the play) Gregor is the only member of his family who earns money. Most of the time, his mother, father, and sister treat him, not as a member of the family, but as a source of income. After his metamorphosis, Gregor cannot work, so his family treats him with disgust, and they neglect him. Once his parents and sister begin working, they find it difficult to communicate with each other after working all day. They eat dinner in silence and fight among themselves. (At the end of the play, they realize) The economic effects on human relationships are these: Full-time jobs are exhausting and dehumanizing. People are only valuable when they earn a salary. This exhausting and dehumanizing work isolates us from others, and it makes us unable to establish human relations.

Family duty -----

----- (In the beginning of the play) Gregor thinks almost entirely of the need to support his parents and his sister. Although Gregor hates his job, he goes to work every day to show his loyalty to his family. He feels that going to work and earning money for the family is his filial duty, but, in truth, he goes far beyond what is required of him as a son. After Gregor’s metamorphosis, the roles are reversed. Gregor now needs his family to take care of him. His mother, father and sister do the work, but they do not find this so easy. As time goes on, his sister takes on the job of continually, day after day, performing the duties of feeding Gregor and keeping his room clean. But she can only go so far, and she gives up when things become too hard. He is kept locked in his room and brought food. His room is barely cleaned and his sister no longer cares about what food she brings him. At the end of the play, she does not care about Gregor. Her actions are routine, as she only wants to do enough so that she can claim she has fulfilled her duty. When she decides she has had enough, she insists that their duty to him has been fulfilled: "I don't think anyone could criticize us," she says as she suggests that they need to get rid of him.

The theme of family and the duties of family members to one another drive the interactions between Gregor, his mother, father and sister.

Alienation -----

Before his metamorphosis, Gregor is alienated from his job, his humanity, his family, and even his body, as we see from the fact that he barely notices his transformation. In fact, even his consideration for his family seems to be something alien to him, as he barely notices it when he loses this consideration at the end. After his metamorphosis, Gregor feels completely alienated from his room and environment and, as a symbol of this, can't even see his street out the window. “The Metamorphosis”, then, is a powerful example of the alienation brought on by modern life.

Freedom and escapism -----

(In the beginning of the play) Gregor is trapped in his job because of his duty to earn money for his family. He dreams of the day when his family's debts are paid, and he can quit his job. His need for freedom from the demands of work and his family obligations are expressed in his metamorphosis. His metamorphosis is the only way he is able to escape. This escape, however, fails to bring Gregor freedom, because he is now imprisoned by his family in his room. Thus, when Gregor works, he is enslaved by his job and, when he doesn't work, he is enslaved by his family. (At the end of the play) Gregor discovers that there is no way of balancing freedom and duty. In the end, an individual is always a slave. Death is the only real escape.

Guilt -----

Guilt stems from family duty, and is Gregor's most powerful emotion. When he is transformed into an insect, Gregor is unable to work by circumstances beyond his control. Despite the fact that his metamorphosis is not his fault, he is racked by guilt every time that the family mentions money or that he thinks about the pain that he has caused them by losing the ability to support them. Guilt, it turns out, is deadly, as Gregor realizes at the end that his life is the only thing keeping the family from a better life. He dies for them just as he lived for them: out of guilt.

Personal identity -----

(In the beginning of the play), Gregor is alone in his room. He is beginning to change, and as the change is happening, he talks about his need to work and earn money to support his family, but also of his hopes of someday not working and being free. He speaks of regaining the self-identity that he lost by living entirely for others and ignoring his own needs. But he knows he cannot, escape from what he sees as his family duty. Even through the metamorphosis, he tries to serve his family doing his best not to inconvenience them. Gregor's comments about his family's behavior are often tinged with resentment at the way they treat him, but he will not allow himself to recognize his bitterness. At the end of the play, Gregor manages to escape his sense of duty, when he realizes that his family has neglected and abandoned him. He finds his humanity only at the end, when his sister's playing reminds him of his love for his family. This love and his freedom are the final ingredients he needs to find his identity.

NB: The themes above were taken from *Spark Notes*: Altshuler, Roman. "The Metamorphosis Themes" GradeSaver, 5, August 2000. See also: <http://www.gradesaver.com/the-metamorphosis/>