

# **The Metamorphosis**

By Franz Kafka

## **Main Characters**

Gregor Samsa - Man who supported his family.

Grete Samsa - Gregor's sister.

Mr. Samsa – Gregor's father

Mrs. Samsa - Gregor's mother .

## **Minor Characters**

Chief Clerk – Gregor's boss.

Boarder – a man that rented a room in the Samsa's apartment.

## **Settings**

Gregor's room - Gregor is locked up here and not allowed to roam about around the other rooms of the house.

Dining room - The rest of the family spends most of its time here talking and eating.

## **Plot**

The story begins with Gregor waking up in bed and finding out that he's just turned into a vermin, probably a roach. Despite his state, Gregor feels that he can still go to work. However, he proves unable to do this when he finds he has so much trouble getting out of bed and opening the door. Furthermore, no one can understand him. Gregor's employer who had come to Gregor's house to take him to work, leaves in a very nervous state and Gregor worries about losing his job. His family, however, cannot believe that the bug is Gregor and shoves him back into his room when Gregor tries to step out badly bruising Gregor. Gregor returns to his room and goes to sleep. The family is now faced with the problem of the lack of money since Gregor was the only member of the family that worked. Luckily, the father had saved some money which the family would be able to live off of for about a year. Also each member of the family got a job. Herr got a job at the bank, Frau got a job knitting lingerie, and Grete got a job as a store clerk. In the meantime, the only person who enters the room is Grete who comes by and feeds Gregor twice a day. Also, the Samsa's rented a room to help pay the rent on the apartment. This boarder, however, did not know about Gregor. One night after dinner, Grete began playing the violin which lured Gregor out into the dining room. The boarder caught sight of him and Herr pushed them into their room out of sight of Gregor. The boarder threatened to leave without paying. Gregor was pushed back into his own room. Early next morning, the sister came to clean and found Gregor dead in his room. She told the rest of the family. They then took a stroll where the Samsa's realized that it was about time that Grete got married.

## Vocabulary

Metamorphosis

Vermin

Turn into

Boarder

Lured

Threatened

## Discussion and Writing Exercise:

### 1. About Gregor

#### a. What was his job?

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#### b. Was Gregor happy with his work? Why? Why not?

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#### c. What plans did Gregor have for the future?

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### 2. About Grete

#### a. Was Grete younger or older than Gregor?

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#### b. What did Grete do before Gregor's transformation?

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#### c. What did she do after?

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d. How did she treat Gregor?

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### 3. About his family

a. Was his family happy before his transformation? Why? Why not?

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b. Was his family fair to Gregor after? Why? Why not?

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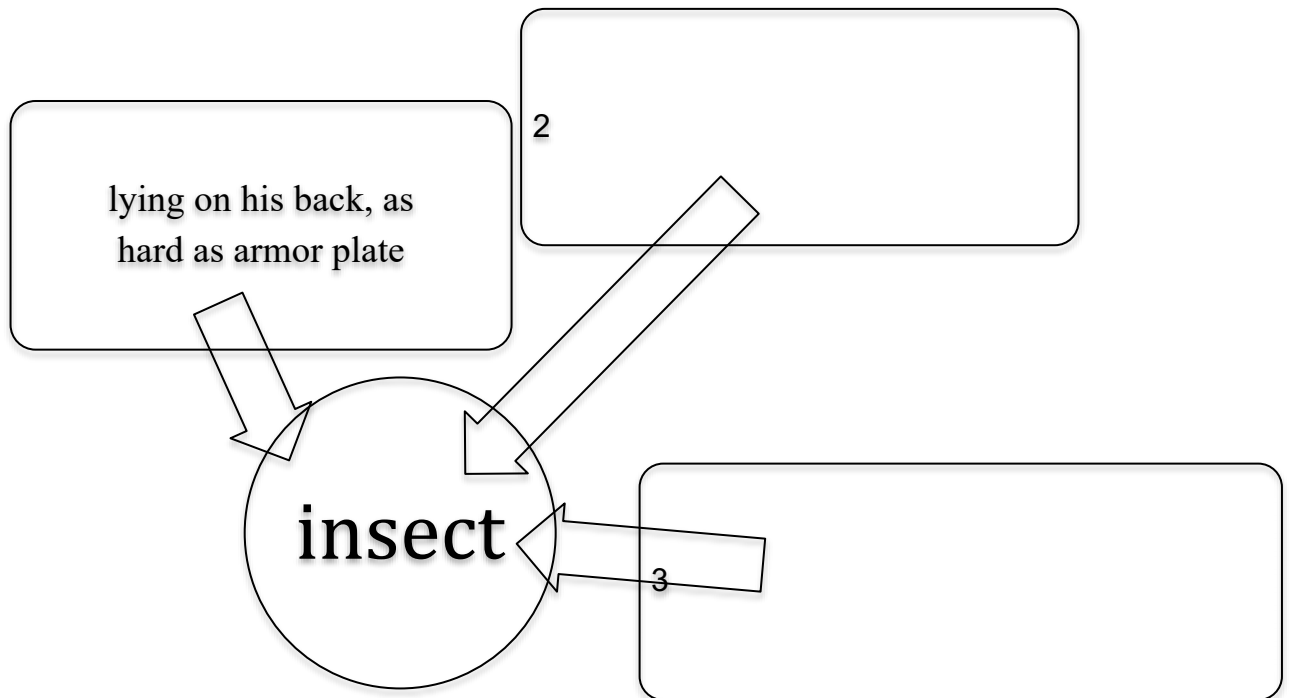
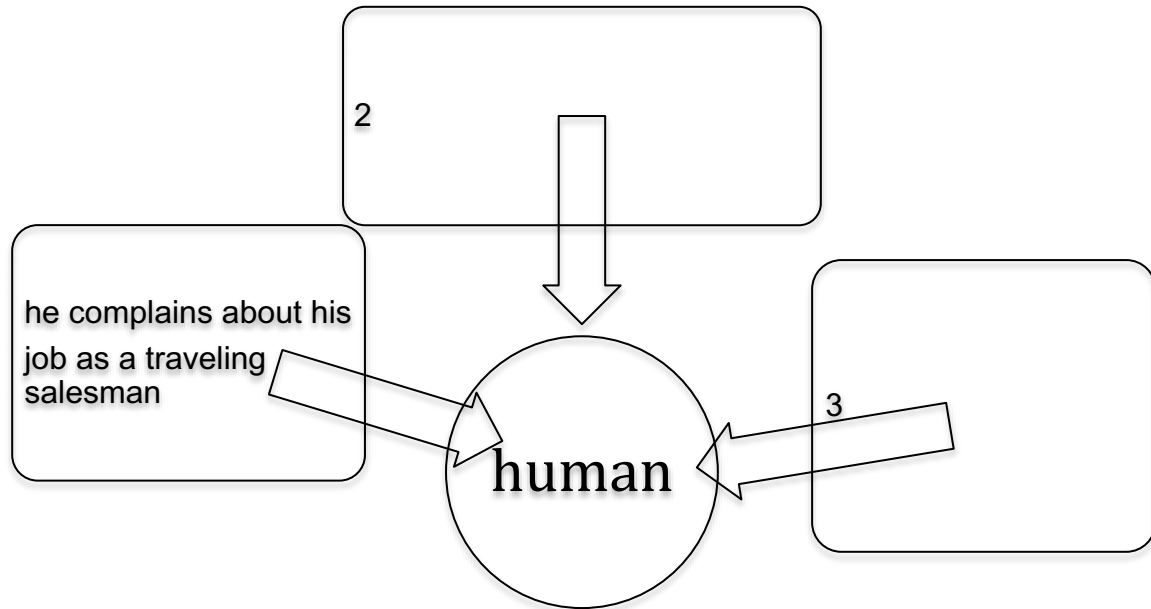
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4. What do you think caused Gregor's metamorphosis?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

5. In the *The Metamorphosis*, Kafka portrays Gregor as a dual being, both human and insect.

For example, Gregor must figure out how his new body functions and learn how to use his legs and turn over. At the same time, he has the thoughts and feelings of a human being. Use the diagram below to note words, phrases, and other information about Gregor's two "selves."



## About Franz Kafka

Franz Kafka (1883-1924) Czech-born German writer is best known for his short story *Metamorphosis* (1912) and the widespread familiarity of the literary term Kafkaesque, inspired by his nightmarishly complex and bizarre yet absurd and impersonal short stories.

Franz Kafka was born 3 July, 1883 in Prague, Bohemia, now the Czech Republic, into a Jewish middle-class, German speaking family; his mother Julie, (née Löwy), three younger sisters and his successful merchant father Hermann. Hermann owned a shop below where the family lived in Prague's House of the Three Kings. He was ill-tempered and disrespectful towards his son's escape into literature and pursuit of writing and proved to be an on-going source of conflict and despair in many of Kafka's works. Kafka became the eldest and only son when his two brothers died in infancy and he was excruciatingly aware of this role in the family for the rest of his life.

The *Metamorphosis* is an autobiographical piece of writing, and parts of the story reflect Kafka's own life. It is well known that Kafka felt like an insect in his father's authoritative presence and even developed a stammer while speaking to him. Gregor, likewise, cowers in fear of his father, who finds him repulsive and attacks him at every turn. Kafka even wrote that he was pleased with the similarity of Samsa's name to his own. Kafka's mother, like her alter-ego of the story, hid silently behind her husband's presence. Out of a sense of duty to his parents, and because he needed money for his planned marriage, Kafka was forced to take an office job he did not enjoy. Furthermore, his family insisted that he needs to spend his afternoons in the office. Kafka himself felt that his presence at the office was pointless, but it took up enough time that he would not be able to write, alienating him from his creative needs. Kafka had been very close to his sister, Ottla, and she usually understood him.