

# Metamorphosis – franz kafka



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka is a novel that very effectively brings out the economic as well as social aspects of being part of a middle class Jewish speaking German family. The protagonist Gregor is subject to exploitation by his overtly lazy father, ailing mother and sister full of 'Childhood flightiness' even before turning into a 'monstrous vermin' and post his transformation. He being the sole bread earner in the family, has all the responsibilities thus leaving him no time to himself causing him to 'lock his door from inside' in order to get some privacy. This shows that due to the poor relationship between his family and him, how he chose to remain further isolated. It also shows how being locked up in his room creates a barrier not only between him and his family, but also the outside world. His metamorphosis not only changes him physically, but brings about a significant change in him mentally. Gregor is fully taken advantage of by his family members, especially his father. For instance, Gregor's father used to 'read the newspaper out loud' and 'hiss at him' and give him a 'shove' which certainly suggests that he is not as weak as he portrays and can definitely work, but chooses to leave it all up to poor Gregor. This is also seen when his father begins to work at the bank after Gregor's transformation. Thus this shows that there is not only a gap in communication but in an expression of emotion leading to isolation and alienation in the household atmosphere. Gregor used to only think about his family as his first priority, and thus he is not worried about turning into a beetle like insect but more because he won't be able to make it for work on time, which reveals his complete selfless nature subject to exploitation. Gregor had 'nothing on his mind but the business' hence he could never really express his emotions of how much he actually hated his job. Gregor is happily allowing his family to misuse him,

without realizing it because he considers it his duty to make up for his father debts. Gregor is in the delusion that his family is calling for the locksmith and doctor to help him out but in fact it was only because they wanted him to go to work thus throwing light upon the lonesome and desolate life he led. His mother shows no signs of sympathy instead she screams and frightens Gregor. His family instead of questioning and caring for him isolates him in his room. Gregor loses his only form of communicating with his family, his voice that further emphasizes on his isolation. Gregor had always believed that his father ' had not been able to save a penny from the business" but in fact there was a little money that remained ' intact' and " had increased through untouched interest". The family does not share basic issues and lacks a bond, and Gregor is always treated as an outsider. Despite all the hard work, when Gregor handed over the money to his family, ' no special feeling of warmth went with it' which further highlights how he is exploited continually and just considered a machine that earns money. After Gregor's metamorphosis he is seen as a ' stranger' something he has always been. Gregor though the one in serious need of help, is still looking out to help his family, even if it means just hiding under the couch to spare anyone the sight of his horrid appearance or " shutting himself out altogether". Yet they show no signs of mercy, and continue to exploit him but in more concrete manners such as removing the furniture - the only thing that reminded him of his ' human past' and his carving on the wall that he clung onto. If the maid is not scared, how can the mother be? After his metamorphosis, ' none had addressed a word directly to him in the past two months', further showing the extent of alienation and loneliness faced by Gregor. Before his transformation also, there used to be hardly any conversation besides that of

money, so now the only difference is that Gregor is seeing it with open eyes. Grete decided to be in charge of Gregor, and hence decided to remove 'all of the furniture with the exception of the indispensable couch'. They didn't remove the 'indispensable couch' because they still found Gregor's appearance to be 'repulsive' and preferred not having any contact with him. She did this only because she enjoyed the importance she got, and it was just out of 'childish flightiness'. They removed 'everything that he loved' thus trying to further break his human bond. His mother, the woman who kept him in her stomach for nine months, the one for whom he worked day in and day out so that she wouldn't have to do household chores, she shrieked at the sight of Gregor and found him repulsive. The mother is also the one who asks for the door to be shut and secludes Gregor even more. What makes it ironic is that a complete stranger, the new maid, is the only person who directly strikes conversation with Gregor and is not repulsed by Gregor. Earlier Gregor used to lock his room from inside, thus choosing to be secluded, now his family locks his room from outside with a key, thus showing how they now choose to remain away from him. The symbolism of them having the 'key' shows their oppressive power over Gregor's mind and actions. What is ironic is that Gregor complains about "constantly seeing new faces, no relationships that last or get more intimate" because of his grueling job as a travelling salesman, but when he actually is stuck at home, he fails to have any real connection, showing how lonely he is as a human being. Gregor is forced to do a job he secretly detests and 'would have quit long ago, if he didn't hold back for his parents sake'. Gregor is alienated, and does not get time to do what he really loves that is carving with a fretsaw. When Gregor was having difficulty getting up from the bed he 'thought how

very simple everything would be if he got someone to help' but because he shared a very sad relationship with his family where he always gave but got nothing in return, he ' could not repress a smile at this thought'. Gregor's room is ' not the regular human room' but a dumping ground where ' Whatever was not being used at the moment was just flung into'. Gregor is an exile in his own very house and his ' imprisonment' helps highlight this. Further, the fact that the family never tries to find out what is really wrong with him, but just shuns him shows how inconsiderate they are towards him. They were too busy dwelling about their ' misfortune', that they blame not being able to shift houses on Gregor. This shows that in the first time that Gregor is in need for them to return the favor by caring for him, how miserably they fail. What particularly highlights his segregation, is that his own family whom he spent all his life worrying about, couldn't even spare a caring thought over him. Grete ' shoved any old food into Gregor's room with her foot' and she ' swept it away with a broom'. The need for Grete to use ' her foot' and the ' broom' shows how Gregor is considered untouchable and an outsider in his own home. What makes this ironic is that Gregor had been closest to his sister and he had dreamt of fulfilling his sisters dreams by sending her to the conservatory, but she is the first one to say " we should get rid of it'. Mr. Samsa complains ' if only he (Gregor) understood us' what is ironical is that Gregor always understood them, it was them who never made an effort to understand him. Instead of easing Gregor's pain, his father pelts him with apple and does not even think of opening ' the other wing of the door in order to give Gregor enough room to pass through'. All the members of the family are too self-centered to ever worry about one another. What is very surprising in the book is that, the family can answer

every whim and fancy of the three boarders, in fact the family now ‘ ate in the kitchen’ and Grete and Mrs. Samsa cooked for the boarders. If they could do so much for the boarders who are outsiders, why not for their own son and brother who was in desperate need of help? Even after his death, they don’t feel any great sense of loss instead Mr. Samsa says, “ Now we can thank god” showing how Gregor was never really treated as a family member and was isolated throughout his lifespan. The family never really functioned as a normal family, but the death of Gregor is what brings dysfunctional family together as “ all three of them left the apartment together, something they had not done in months”. Thus, Gregor was not only alienated and isolated from his family, but also from the outside world. The book tracks the journey of him initially not having any self-knowledge to him finally letting his unconscious mind out.