

Franz kafka life and style

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FRANZ KAFKA LIFE AND STYLE Through out time, there have been many interesting and particular authors that have been able to differentiate from many if not from all. Despite this I believe I have seen nothing like Franz Kafka. This is why I decided to write my paper on him and his particular style. Since I believe that no one develops a singular style without a singular past, I will begin by describing some of his background and his origins. Then I will continue to describe, interpret and connect three of his short stories from my own personal perspective. The stories included in my analysis are "The Judgment" (I made emphasis in this story since it's the one we covered in class) "The Metamorphosis" and "The Trial". Franz Kafka was born in Prague to middle-class Jewish parents. His father, the son of a village butcher, did not have a strong educational background but his ambition compensated for the education he lacked. He rose from a traveling peddler to a successful retailer and wholesaler, and married the daughter of a wealthy brewery owner. Kafka was the firstborn, followed by two brothers who died in infancy, and then three surviving sisters. Throughout his life, Kafka's memories of his childhood, and in particular of his childhood relationship to his father, were bitter. Kafka entered law school and received a doctorate degree. While a law student, he associated with many members of Prague's burgeoning scene of young, German speaking writers. During this time, Kafka knew writing was his vocation, but did not feel he could make a living at it but he didn't want to try either. Concerning his love life he encountered a very long and complicated relationship with Felice Bauer. It seems like he was trying to convince himself to be with her, got engaged twice and he ended the engagement both times. Through out his life his relationship with his father never really improved. He wrote a letter to his <https://assignbuster.com/franz-kafka-life-and-style/>

father describing how he had feared him and how he felt. Despite this communication effort, the father never received the letter. Kafka's conflictive personality has been discovered through his diaries. In his diaries he acknowledged he was a gifted writer, but sometimes thought this gift was a curse. He lived in chronic depression and alternatively blamed his father and himself. Finally in 1924, at the age of 41, Kafka died of tuberculosis. His novels *Amerika*, *The Trial*, and *The Castle* were left unfinished. In my opinion, when you are reading "The Judgment" one encounters two options: over-simplify or over-analyze. Then again, I am likely to over-analyze the work because it demanded my attention the first time I read the story. I have read the story many times and in many languages. It is not my personal favorite Kafka story, but I find the structure very compelling. The main character in "The Judgment" is Georg Bendemann. Kafka explained in a letter to Felice Bauer that Georg was him, thinly veiled. By trying to be a man, Georg is attempting to become his father's equal, which no son can do in his own mind. The tale begins when a young man, Georg, writes a letter to inform a close friend who lives in Russia of his engagement to a young woman from a supposedly well-placed family. Georg's friend had moved to Russia to conduct business. Unfortunately, the friend's ventures are failing. Out of "empathy", Georg has not revealed his own increasingly good fortunes to this friend. I say "empathy" because we never really know if he really liked his friend or even if such friend existed. Before mailing the letter, Georg checks on his father, a once imposing man who is now a sickly, senile shell. The conversation begins with the father, who admits to a faulty memory, demanding to know if Georg really has a friend in St. Petersburg. After Georg tells the story of his friend's move to Russia, his father declares that he does

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indeed remember the friend. Georg's father declares, " Of course I know your friend. He would have been a son after my own heart. " This mildly cruel statement is accompanied by the revelation Georg's father is aware that his son has been writing " lies" to the friend. The father's outrage makes little sense, since the friend is a failing businessman who lives in solitude, while Georg has turned his father's business into a growing enterprise. This point was very interesting to me because Kafka's father probably wanted a son that would be a great business man but instead he had Franz who was a failing businessman who lives in solitude. So, as typically done by Kafka, the reader is left in confusion. Finally the father condemns Georg to death. The reason is still unclear because it could be interpreted from many points of view. One could be because he was trying to take over his father, or because he had been a hypocritical friend to the man in Russia, or maybe even because he had been trying to cover that there was no such friend in Russia because he was his own friend. Some critics have maintained the story is much more basic than that of a son punished for taking power from his father. There is also a lot of mystery revolving around the mother. It is clear that in a way or more, Georg did dishonor his mother; the father hints this. If this is true, then Georg's suicide is an act of guilt. After being judged by his father, Georg flees the house, runs to a bridge, and tosses himself into the river. Kafka describes Georg's last act: " He swung himself over, like the distinguished gymnast he had once been in his youth, to his parents' pride. " Oddly enough, Georg's last statement is, " Dear parents, I have always loved you, all the same. " Written in a single night, 22 September, 1912, " The Judgment" is a great literary accomplishment. The story is not simple to read, requiring the reader untangle the relationships between a father, son,

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and an unseen friend in Russia. It is the difficulty of the story that draws the reader into the text. I also believe that the fact that marriage is supposed to improve the standing of Georg Bendemann could be related to Kafka's own engagements to Felice Bauer. "The Judgment" was written before Franz Kafka asked Felice Bauer, who happened to be a young woman from a moderately successful family, to marry him. Three years later Kafka wrote "Metamorphosis". This rather longer than Kafka's usual writings, begins "Als Gregor Samsa eines morgens aus unruhigen Träumen erwachte, fand er sich in seinem Bett zu einem ungeheueren Ungeziefer verwandelt."

Translated in various editions as a "gigantic insect" and an "enormous bug," the form assumed by Gregor Samsa one morning is never specific. Easily Kafka's most famous work, "Metamorphosis" deals with the acceptance of an absurd fate. Salesman Gregor Samsa wakes one morning to find himself an insect. He does not panic; in fact, he reacts with calm, convinced he can still function within human society. As the story progresses, Gregor slowly accepts he is not human. Not only can he not function within normal society, but he is also an outcast from his own family, even his beloved sister.

Gregor's income had supported the Samsa family, so his transformation results in a series of changes within the household. First, his father is forced to take a position as a doorman. When the job proves insufficient, the Samsas take in three boarders. These men are quite orderly and demanding. One night they ask Gregor's sister, Grete, to play the violin for them. Before Gregor's transformation, she had hoped to study violin. While she plays, Gregor is overcome by emotion and leaves his room, in which he normally hides from his family and the renters. When one of the renters spots Gregor, he and the other renters announce the house is disgusting and filthy. Gregor

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returns to his room, while the family discusses what a problem he has become. Even his sister, the person for whom he cared most, suggests the family must find a way to dispose of Gregor. Emotionally broken, Gregor dies, alone in his room that very night. When the giant insect is discovered the next morning by the chambermaid, the family finds new energy. Free of Gregor, it is made clear by Kafka the family is now happy, they have been transformed. It is easy to see the Kafka name in "Samsa", there was no effort by the author to hide the fact he was writing a story about his own emotional state. Kafka's never ending sense of alienation is well documented. In his diaries, he often compared himself to a bug, a worm, and other animals meant to generate disgust. Kafka himself had one sister, Ottla, with whom he was particularly close. The last story written by Kafka which I have read is "The Trial". In a very brief and concise summary, "The Trial" is about Josef K. who awakes one night to discover men walking about the boarding house in which he resides. These men promptly arrest Josef, without stating a reason. When Josef asks why he is being arrested, one man tells him he will be told in "due course." The reader senses immediately Josef will not learn what crime he has committed. Maybe Josef has committed no crime, or maybe the crime was minor, but the reader knows the punishment is certainly severe. Bibliography Brod, Max trans. G. Humphreys Roberts and Richard Winston; Franz Kafka: A Biography (New York: Da Capo Press, 1937. 1995) Diamant, Kathi; Kafka's Last Love: The Mystery of Dora Diamant (London: Secker & Warburg, 2003) Hayman, Ronald; K, a Biography of Kafka (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981) Hubben, William; Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche & Kafka (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1952. 1997) Kafka, Franz; The Basic Kafka with <https://assignbuster.com/franz-kafka-life-and-style/>

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