

# Plot and subplot of metamorphosis essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The play opens with Gregor and his family entering the stage one by one.

His transformation into a beetle is narrated. As he wakes up for work, he looks at his clock, and the ticking of this that marks the idea of time forever moving on recurs throughout the play. It is made clear that Gregor is already late for work. His job is described – “ up again at four am...

to catch the five am train”, which shows that he works many antisocial hours to provide for his family. He is the sole earner of the family – “ I have to work to keep them” – so his family will suffer if he cannot make it to work. The implication is that whilst Gregor suffers through work and his family gain from it, Gregor might gain from not being able to work as he will not have the stresses of little sleep and travelling although his family will suffer. There is a flashback to an average day for Gregor, where he returns home late from work.

Greta, Gregor’s younger sister, cares deeply about him but his parents seem more interested in the material goods Gregor’s work can provide for him. Gregor has issues about his work: he has a very harsh boss that makes his job hard and unhappy, but his father has a debt that needs paying off. When he feels ill, Greta suggests he stays off work, but his parents are determined for it not to happen as his job and the money it brings is more important to them. The play returns to the morning it began on, at half past six. There is a panic because he is not up in time; he will either be late or miss work completely – it is not yet known to them that Gregor is unable to move.

It shows that the family are totally dependant on Gregor and this is highlighted through their actions of not even physically going up to his room.

When Gregor has still not appeared at quarter to seven, the Chief Clerk appears at the door. His character becomes the most powerful figure within the household as well as representing the outside world. His enquiries show that Gregor really is a beetle, and it has not just been a metaphor. Because Gregor is locked in his room, and the family are under the influence of the Chief Clerk, they physically travel to his door to try to persuade him out. Their persuasions turn to encouragement because he is unable to open the door, but this soon turns to anger which adds to the family's inability to function properly without Gregor.

The door eventually opens and the family see Gregor as a beetle for the first time. The Chief Clerk leaves in hysteria and the family make their different reactions. Mr Samsa disowns him; Mrs Samsa is torn between motherly love and the fear and disgust of his beetle state; and Greta tries to be practical and just try to make sure Gregor is as comfortable as possible. Mrs Samsa and Greta decide to give him some milk whilst Mr Samsa hates the idea of being near him.

The milk symbolises Gregor's childlike dependence now he is in beetle form. The colour white could also represent the purity and innocence of his personality, as well as the sterile white of hospitals, suggesting the milk is helping him to feel better. This is followed by his brief return to human form "stimulated by the reminder of gentle and past reminders of milk". The family then decide that Gregor needs to eat and to be cared for. This idea gradually unites the family as they begin to gather scraps of food.

But this illusion is shattered when Mr Samsa screams “ Quiet!”. The difficulty of the situation builds up his frustration and he is desperate to return to normality and regain his authority. Gregor’s health is then shown to be decreasing as he has not eaten for several days. The family’s money is low due to the lack of income as they argue over a wasted potato.

There is the realisation within a dream that there will never be money to send Greta to the Conservatorium, and the divide between Gregor and his father is increased because it was Mr Samsa’s fault the money wasn’t saved. The family begin to create their own new normality without Gregor. They devise their plans to provide an income for themselves and Gregor becomes less and less important. Gregor tries to talk to Greta one morning in attempt to secure his former place in the family, but it is useless; the result is further separation from the family since Greta has been frightened for the first time. Mr Samsa gets a job as bank messenger.

The family’s spirits are raised in the hope of more money and a new routine. When he goes to work they decide to move furniture in Gregor’s room. This plan frightens Gregor, who sees it as an invasion of his space but also as a destruction of his former humanity. The hope of his returning to his human state has been based around his belongings and the reminders of his normal lifestyle, which helped him to keep in touch with who he was. In terror he escapes from his room, causing Mr Samsa to violently throw things.

Mr Samsa’s character is shown as desperate to be in control so, when ever other method he tries fails to work, he resorts to violently attempting to cripple his ‘ opponent’ – his only son, Gregor. This is ironic as Gregor’s

escape suggests he has been confined in his room against his will – giving the family the authority over Gregor. Mr Samsa also reveals a hidden depth within this, for he has been too feeble and ill to work or do anything else for his family up until now. The family tire of their jobs as they realise Gregor is not changing back. The decision is to have three lodgers, which take the place of Gregor as money-bringers.

This replacement is continued as Greta throws the lodger's unwanted items into Gregor's room, as if he is no longer important. Gregor becomes bitter and slides himself into the full view of the lodgers. His appearance causes reactions of amusement, but then anger and disgust from the lodgers as they realise they are sharing a building with him. Mr Samsa is put down by the lodgers and viewed at the same level as Gregor, so that he begins to feel the similar emotions of being inadequate, abnormal and disowned. The lodgers leave, and the family realise that Gregor's beetle state is responsible, once again, for the loss of their money and routine. Greta finally disowns him, refusing to accept that the beetle is her brother – “get rid of the idea that he is Gregor”.

Gregor himself no longer feels as he used to, and is contented with the idea of death and leaving his troubled family so that he is no longer a burden on them. The family become peaceful after Gregor's death. They begin to see their lives and jobs in a more positive light instead of the tense, money-fuelled mess of before. Mr and Mrs Samsa's attention is turned to Greta, as if through the ordeal they have not paid attention to her. The mention of them finding a good husband for her suggests they are about to become more responsible parents and not expect Greta to do everything for them.