

Breaking symbolizes
the degrading lifestyle
that gregor



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Breaking Down "The Metamorphosis" Breaking Down "The Metamorphosis"

Franz Kafka's beginning of his novel, "The Metamorphosis," begins with what would seem a climactic moment: "As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect." From this point on, the reader is determined to make sense of this transformation. However, the reader later comes to realize that Gregor is actually not an insect, but this metamorphosis into a vermin was purely symbolic. It symbolizes the degrading lifestyle that Gregor leads to support his family. This leads the reader to understand Gregor's absurd dilemma.

Gregor's insignificant and outcast lifestyle of supporting his family proves that "the universe is irrational, and man's place in it is absurd." This is proven by the fact that Gregor is working to pay off his father's debts and provide for his family. His work is mundane, and strictly business. Yet, when the metamorphosis of Gregor takes place, his family practically shuns him from their contact. Still however, Gregor's first thoughts after believing that he is an insect, are to get dressed and go to work. This attitude is seemingly absurd, however Gregor is so deep into trying to help his family, that he makes an attempt at ignoring the impossibility of working.

The idea that "Humankind is disconnected from reality," is set in stone by Kafka when he writes about the transformation of Gregor's families' lives, and his own. The Samsa's treated Gregor simply as a means to get out of debt, although the reader comes to realize later that the family was not as bad off as Gregor had believed. Also, the father returns back to work after Gregor cannot, which proves that his disability not nearly as severe as he

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had Gregor believed. Although Gregor is the family member that turns into a bug, he remains the only one of them to retain humanity. The family cannot grasp that the bug in the bedroom is Gregor, their son and brother. They disconnect themselves from him, forgetting that they have known him his entire life, and once perhaps loved him. After his metamorphosis, Gregor became the member of the family in need, yet instead of helping him, as he helped them, Gregor became a burden to the family. The family, especially the father and mother do not make an attempt to understand Gregor's situation, but instead make it worse and harder for Gregor.

The family's reality is tainted by the fact that Gregor was always a tool of income and stability, and now is of no help whatsoever. Many ideas and thoughts are proven in "The Metamorphosis," but perhaps none so boldly as the idea that "Intimacy is impossible." Kafka writes of Gregor, "often haunted by the idea that the next time the door opened he would take the families' affairs in hand again just as he used to do." Gregor, after transforming had to come to terms with the fact that his family's love was a love based on a responsibility to the family, instead of an unconditional love.

Kafka is saying that unconditional does not exist. He is also saying that we all feed off of each other, and our love is an extension of this. When the ability to function as we always had is gone, so is the love we once thought we would have forever. Gregor's father exhibited a "mulishness that had obsessed his since he became a bank manager.

"Gregor's father not only neglected his son, the son who attempted to provide and take his father's place as the breadwinner for the family, but

also developed a hatred for Gregor. Gregor presented a profound love for his family, which was not reciprocated after Gregor could no longer be of service to them. Another firm idea that Kafka presents to the reader is that “ People live unremembered lives.” This is shown with Kafka’s creation of the father’s disgust for his son, Gregor. The father, forgetting that Gregor was once the son he had acted as if he loved, threw an apple into Gregor’s back which became embedded.

The apple eventually became infected and was the death of Gregor. The apple is a symbol for Gregor’s absurd guilt. The apple dates back to Adam and Eve, and the guilt of giving into temptation. Gregor did not give into temptation, but still feels an indescribable guilt because he can no longer bring in funds for his family. The irony of this is that, the family forgot all that Gregor had tried to do for them, and quickly began to loathe Gregor’s presence in the household. After Gregor’s death, his parents wonder about the eventual marriage of their daughter.

They had, within a short time frame completely forgotten about their once beloved son. One other idea that Kafka worked into this story is that “ All people are outlaws.” This seemingly outrageous statement can be explained through Gregor’s absurd dilemma as a vermin. Gregor became the source of income for his family, and yet once he could no longer help the family, they stop loving him. Without his initial function, he became an outlaw of family life.

Gregor eventually wanted the family to give up all hope in him, a hope that he wanted to exist but did not. “ He thought back on his family with deep

emotion and love. His conviction that he would have to disappear was, if possible, even firmer than his sister's." Immediately after this line, Gregor Samsa committed suicide. As the family came to learn of Gregor's death, the father said, " Well, now thanks be to God." The sister appears to not be upset, but rather in a state of disbelief that the burden on their family is finally gone.

When Gregor's mother learns of his death, she questions it, to check the validity, and then tell her daughter to come join them with a " tremendous smile." However, it is arguable whether he killed himself, or Gregor died of a broken heart. The story of Gregor Samsa and his metamorphosis is one of sorrow, but more a story to unveil the cruelties of Humankind. Kafka's brilliance and understanding of human nature can not be fully grasped by quickly reading the story, but instead divulging into the hidden messages Kafka inserts within the text.