

# Juan merlo

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



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Metamorphosis In Franz Kafka's " The Metamorphosis, " despite a complete physical transformation into an insect by the main character, Gregor Samsa, the true changes occur within not only Gregor, but also in his family. Initially, the members of the Samsa family appear hopeless and static, owing to the difficulties resulting from Gregor's transformation as well as their financial predicament. Over time, though, they are able to overcome their financial difficulties, and when Gregor finally dies and the family no longer has to deal with his presence, all the family members are reinvigorated. They have completed an emotional transformation and their hope is revitalized.

Gregor's physical transformation into an insect does not initially change him mentally in that he still wants to go to work so that he can provide for his family. It takes him time to realize that he can no longer play that role in his family, whereas he can't even go outside in his current state. As the story continues, Gregor's insect body has an increasing influence on his psyche. He finds that he is at ease hiding in the dark under the sofa in his room, as a bug would, even though his body will not fit comfortably. He also discovers that he enjoys crawling on the walls and ceiling. These small acts of enjoyment show how he starts thinking about himself and not just about his family. In an article entitled "' The Metamorphosis' By Franz Kafka: A Summary, Analysis, And Interpretation" by Frances Colleen, she says that " his transformation into an insect symbolized a ' desire for flight' from his present life, a wish to retreat from the world and to be relieved of, all responsibility" (2). Gregor begins to realize that he enjoys not having the responsibility of his family's debt, hostility, and alienation-somewhat of a "

salvation from his guilt and solitude" ("The Metamorphosis", 1). He realizes "he had been a 'vermin,' crushed and circumscribed by authority and routine. He had been imprisoned by social and economic demands: 'Just don't stay in bed being useless...'" (Coulehan, 1). He is released from a much despised job, his resentment of the weight of family responsibility, and soon comes to realize that even though he becomes a stinky, garbage-eating vermin, he is freer than he ever was as a human. Gregor's humanity never disappears entirely. He still feels human emotions and has strong memories of his human life. As a result, even though he knows he will feel more physically comfortable if his room is emptied of furniture, allowing him to crawl anywhere he pleases, Gregor panics when Grete and his mother are taking out the furniture, such as the writing desk he remembers doing all his assignments on as a boy (Kafka, 319). In a desperate attempt to hold on to the few reminders he has of his humanity, he clings to the picture of the woman muffled in fur so that no one will take it away (Kafka, 319). Ultimately he's unable to fully adapt to his new body or to find a new role within his family, who are disgusted by him and ashamed of his presence in the house. "Out of work and dependent on the goodwill of the others, particularly sister Grete, Gregor increasingly comes to regard himself as a repulsive burden" ("The Metamorphosis", 1). Toward the end of the story, he continues to feel haunted by the thought that he might still be able to take control of the family's affairs again and resume his role as the family's breadwinner. Despite these hopes, he decides it will be best for the family if he disappears entirely, and so he dies much as he lived: accepting his fate without complaint and thinking of his family's best interests (Kafka, 331).

Grete, however, changes more than any other character in the story—in essence undergoing her own metamorphosis from a girl into a woman—and that change occurs while her pity for Gregor slowly diminishes. “ It is she who “ blossoms, ” while her brother deteriorates; it is a gender-role reversal and self-liberation as her role in life unfolds and Gregor’s collapses” (Straus, 2042). While at first Grete takes care of her brother out of kindness, eventually she comes to regard the job as a duty. She doesn’t always enjoy it, but it serves to define her position in the family, and she becomes territorial about caring for Gregor, not even wanting her mother to be involved (Kafka, 317). As she matures and takes on more adult responsibilities, most notably getting a job to help provide for her family financially, her commitment to Gregor diminishes. Eventually she comes to resent the role, and it is Grete who decides they must get rid of Gregor. “ Only when Grete blooms into an eligible young woman, ripe for the job and marriage markets, and we recognize that her empowerment is also an ironic reification. She has been transformed at another’s expense, and she will carry within her the marketplace value that has ultimately destroyed Gregor” (Straus, 2042). Gregor’s father, Mr. Samsa, appears as a hopeless and unkind man, concerned primarily with money, who is not particularly close to his son. We learn, for example, that he had a business that failed, and since its failure he has lost his motivation and essentially has given up work (Kafka, 315). Mr. Samsa has no sympathy for Gregor after Gregor undergoes his metamorphosis. On the day of Gregor’s change, the father only seems concerned about the family’s finances, and in the two instances when he interacts directly with Gregor in the story, he attacks Gregor in some way,

first when he beats Gregor back into his room at the beginning and later when he throws the fruit at him (Kafka, 311, 321). These details suggest a strained relationship between Gregor and his father. Gregor views his dad as a failure and weak. Concurrently, Gregor's father views Gregor in much the same way-being weak and insignificant, other than relying on him to be the money-maker (Kafka, 315). Mr. Samsa's transformation occurs when he goes from "being disabled, mobilizes and returns to work; he changes from being an "old man" to a bank official "holding himself very erect" (Coulehan, 1). Mrs. Samsa, Gregor's mother, is frail and distressed; the mother is torn between her love for Gregor and her horror at Gregor's new state. Grete and Gregor's father seeks to protect her from the full reality of her son's transformation. She finds herself not wanting to come to terms with what has happened to her son. At the beginning of the story, she tries to protect him from the office manager, who is "outside his bedroom door demanding an explanation" ("The Metamorphosis", 1). In time her love for him changes as she starts seen him only as a horrible insect and not as her son. Her transformation from a caring mother to someone that just wants the bug gone is the saddest part of the whole story. The title of this story does not merely suggest a superficial transformation of Gregor's dehumanizing physical mutation; ("The Metamorphosis", 1) it refers to a much deeper emotional and sociological change that occurs within a family that has been economically and socially suppressed. By retreating into their own little worlds and viewing, and invariably treating, Gregor as nothing more than a financial mechanism to turn the family's wheel, Gregor's family has irrevocably alienated their own son. Gregor Samsa has dubious feelings

about his family; he loves them as one would any member of his family, yet because of his duties to support his family, he loses his own identity and fails at a chance to have a life of his own, until he becomes the nasty bug in the house that just does not die, at which point he finally discovers what it means to truly do what he wants. Simultaneously, Gregor's family goes through their own metamorphoses, in which they ' cast off the chains of suppression' and begin to discover who and what they are and can now be, and reenergize their own lives by finding new jobs and new roles in life. A story of alienation and powerlessness, both of Gregor and his family members, this story tells of expectations —both external and internal, repression, regression, inadequacy, guilt, domination, and finally, liberation for both Gregor and his family. Works Cited Strauss, Nina Pelikan. " Transformations in The Metamorphosis. " Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing. Ed. X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia. 11th ed. New York: Longman, 2010. 2042. Print. Coulehan, Jack. " Literature Annotations: ' The Metamorphosis. "' Literature, Arts, and Medicine Database. 3 January 1994. Bantam. WEB. 2 July 2012. Colleen, Frances. "' The Metamorphosis' By Franz Kafka: A Summary, Analysis And Interpretation. " Streetarticles. com. WEB. 13 May 2011. 4 July 2012. " The Metamorphosis." Magill Book Reviews. Ed. Frank Northern Magill. Salem Press, Inc., 2005. eNotes. com. WEB. 4 Jul, 2012. Franz Kafka. " The Metamorphosis. " Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing. Ed. X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia. 11th ed. New York: Longman, 2010. 301-331. Print.