

Gregor's transitions described in metamorphosis

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



Metamorphosis begins with Gregor, a travelling salesman, waking up one morning before he has to report to his miserable job, as a beetle. Throughout the short story, Franz Kafka, the author, showcases the many changes that occur from the day Gregor wakes up as a bug, to his unfortunate deterioration, and eventually his somber death. His family, which includes Grete, his sister, and his mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. Samsa, all go through immense transformations, not only individually, but with their relationships with one another. The title of Metamorphosis is the titular word for the changes which occur in not only the most obvious of them all, Gregor, but of all the underlying layers of the rest of the family.

“ One morning, upon awakening from agitated dreams, Gregor Samsa found himself, in his bed, transformed into a monstrous vermin,” (1999). With this genuinely powerful opening line, Kafka lays out the entire premise of the short story. Gregor wakes up turned into a bug. There is no backstory, nor anything about Gregor and his life in real time before this transformation occurs. Other than what is told throughout the remainder of the story, we know nothing of how Gregor, or his family, lived.

The most obvious connection with the title of Metamorphosis is Gregor's change from human to bug. Of course, turning into a bug is something that is implausible to ever happen in real life. This results in him having human like thoughts in an insect body. “ True, the others no longer understood what he said even though it sounded clear enough to him, clearer than before, perhaps because his ears had gotten used to it,” (2005). Upon turning into a bug, he is now no longer able to communicate with anyone. What sounds fine to him, in his head, cannot be understood by his family, or any human

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for that matter. He also, has trouble getting out of bed and getting to the door, once his supervisor comes to check up on why he missed his train for work. "... I absolutely must be out of bed completely before the clock strikes seven-fifteen," (2002) Gregor says. He doesn't even think about his current state as a bug, but is more worried about his absence from work, and trying to catch the next train. That would be entirely impossible in his new body, and anyway in normal circumstances, if someone was to turn into a bug, their reaction should be a lot different than what Gregor's was. He has trouble adjusting to his new physical state, with his little legs and his broad appearance. It is never noted exactly just how big Gregor is, because normally bug's are quite small. But, having turned from human into bug, it makes sense for him to be large and in proportion to his previous state. This can also be proved when he gets stuck between a doorway and his father shoves him in.

In addition to the physical change that Gregor goes through, he goes through a mental change as well. Gregor's physical metamorphosis is a metaphor for his mental metamorphosis of a man who is alienated from his family and society. There is the change of Gregor during the time he started the job as the travelling salesman and became enslaved to his family, about 5 years prior to his metamorphosis, to the glimpse we see of his time in the army as a young man. " On the wall directly opposite hung a photograph of Gregor from his army days in a lieutenant's uniform, his hand on his sword, a carefree smile on his lips, demanding respect for his bearing and rank," (2007). This one line shows how Gregor was at one time free from his dismal existence, brandishing a carefree smile, instead. Also he was not just a

colonel, but a lieutenant, and demanded respect for the rank he held. The choice of words Kafka uses are very deliberately picked, I believe, because they do a fantastic job of showing a complete juxtaposition of Gregor as we now know him. He no longer demands respect, instead he is indebted to his parents and sister, by providing monetarily. He no longer wears a carefree smile, instead miserable and enslaved by his job that he has not had a day off of in five years. Everything Gregor once was, from this one description of a picture hanging on his wall, is everything Gregor no longer is. He supported his family because his parents were old and his sister young, but really when given the need, they were perfectly able of supporting themselves, and even happier that way. "... their jobs were all exceedingly advantageous and also promising" (2030). Did the family really need Gregor to squander his life away for them, or were they just using him as their crutch, to not have to work. But, when he turns into a vermin, it's easy for them to justify excluding him from the inner-circle, and eventually rationalizing his unimportance to them.

Grete, Gregor's young sister, is the only one out his family who can bear to even be in the mere vicinity of Gregor, in his new state. She starts off as more sympathetic, and becomes the only one who feeds him, at the very least. " For there stood a bowl full of fresh milk with tiny slices of white bread floating in it," (2010). This shows that Grete cared enough to put out Gregor's favorite food, leaving it there for him once he wakes up. Even something so small, is significant when the mother cannot stand the sight of him, resulting in her fainting, and the father is extremely violent towards him. She even went so far as to bring, "... him a whole array of food, all

spread out on an old newspaper," (2011). If someone did not care about a person at all, they would never do this for them, especially if it was so easy to do the opposite. However, as the story goes on she becomes increasingly repelled by Gregor. She is the one who initiates the idea that enough is enough, and that the monstrosity that his holed up in his room, is no longer Gregor. "' You simply have to try and get rid of the idea that it is Gregor. Our real misfortune is that we believed it for such a long time. Just how can that possibly be Gregor...?" (2027). Referring to Gregor, as " it" shows that she does not view Gregor as human anymore, but as something disposable and ruining their lives. " We must try to get rid of it. We have done everything humanly possible to look after it..." (2026). She no longer has any sympathies or grief over letting Gregor die. This change that she goes through, is not really explained from her point of view, and we do not get much of a glimpse of her mindset. It seems more for her parents, after seeing her mother and fathers distress. "... the door was hastily slammed, bolted, and locked," (2027-2028). The multiple descriptions Kafka uses to describe the last and final moment that will conclusively lead to Gregor's death, shows a finality of the family's irreversible decision. For the family, there is no going back from this. The door is locked, and they do not care about what happens to " it" in the room.

The next morning, Gregor, " held on long enough to glimpse the start of the overall brightening outside... then his head involuntarily sank... and his final breath came feebly from his nostrils," (2028). Once again, Kafka writes such a powerful end to Gregor's death, with his description of his final moments. The fact that Gregor held on to catch a peek of the sunshine is such a

somber thought for someone who is dying. Sunshine corresponds to happiness and joy, while death is the complete opposite. He sees his last glimpse of the outside world, a ray of light, and then sinks into death, and darkness.