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plot, setting,  
characterization, or  
theme when writing a  
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Alienation as a Theme in Metamorphosis Franz Kafka stresses his themes more so than any other element in his story 'Metamorphosis'. Of the many themes conveyed throughout the text, alienation is the most apparent and fundamental. 'Metamorphosis' deals with the brutal reality, monotony and absurdity of human existence in quite a dark manner, seen through the eyes of protagonist Gregor and the relationship he has with his family and ultimately, himself. Alienation from almost all aspects of an individual's life is an underlying theme which can be traced throughout the entire story.

However, rather than being an isolated event, alienation here is depicted as an inevitable process which begins with alienation from external forces and ultimately leads to alienation from within one's own physical and emotional states.

Right at the beginning of the story, prior to his physical metamorphosis, Gregor already appears to be alienated in some way. This initial suggestion of alienation surrounds his external environment; his work, social life and to some extent, his family. He reflects over the monotony of his life in terms of his job, a monotony he endures due to the pressure of having to support his family financially. He appears to have no friends or social life to speak of, and his family seem to take his support for granted. Even the duty of caring for his family seems to be something strange to him, as he hardly realizes it when he loses this duty by the end.

After establishing Gregor's alienation from his societal environment and duties, we begin to see the process of deeper alienation from his family, his immediate environment, his emotions and his body. When he wakes to find his body changed, he is so disconnected from it he hides away from those

closest to him. As his family become aware of the situation, they cease speaking to him altogether, eventually determining that the animal they see before them is not Gregor, “ You must just try to get rid of the idea that this is Gregor. The fact that we’ve believed it for so long is the root of all our trouble”, (Kafka 40). After the metamorphosis Gregor undergoes total alienation from his house and environment. Symbolic of this, Gregor cannot even view his street through the window and hence he slowly becomes a foreigner in his own family and home, without a productive role to play, as his family treat him with neglect and revulsion.

The metamorphosis Gregor undergoes highlights the fact that the author is attempting to stress his theme of alienation more so than any other element. Gregor changes from an active social being to a useless and non active person within his family and society. More importantly, his transformation represents a physical manifestation of the alienation process he has already begun. From feeling isolated from his job, society, family and life in general, Gregor moves through a process of directing this alienation inward, leaving him utterly isolated from his own emotions, psychological state and even his own body. As Gregor's alienation was so advanced even from the beginning of the story, it was inevitable he would experience further alienation until he was so isolated, there was nothing left to do but die.

#### Works Cited

Kafka, Franz. *The Metamorphosis*. New York: Bantam Classics, 1972. Print.