

Franz kafka and his father relationship



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Franz Kafka: How his relationship with his father was revealed in “ A Letter to My Father”, “ The Judgment”, & “ The Metamorphosis”? Franz Kafka is an icon of dark existentialist and absurdist literature that frequently wrote about themes of isolation, alienation, and authoritarian oppression. His well-known work includes the short stories “ The Metamorphosis”, and “ The Judgment. ” as well as his prominent “ Letter to His Father”, in which he attempted to clarify the tense relationship and his emotional oddness. Franz Kafka was born in Prague on July 3rd, 1883.

Prague was a perplexed city, a great deal like Kafka himself. With several languages and ethnic groups struggling for a position in Prague, it was apparent in the late 19th century that Jewish residents were relatively low in social status. Kafka was a Czech-born, German-speaking Jewish boy. Franz had a complex time while living at home because he suffered from hypersensitivity to noise and a yearning for solitude. His father Hermann was an importer and ran a store specializing in “ fine goods” for the rising middle-class. Hermann was a self-made man, extremely aware of his own success and his son’s lack of success.

His father quite often, verbally abused Franz, a truth revealed in a good deal of Kafka’s stories and within his diaries. Kafka never did rebel openly against his father; however, he did express his feelings towards his father in many pieces of work. In “ Letter to My Father”, Franz Kafka openly expresses his feelings and emotions towards the relationship he had with his father. Hermann Kafka was a major influence in the writer’s life, commonly described as big, loud, impulsive, and authoritarian.

He stated: “ My writing was all about you; all I did there, after all, was to bemoan what I could not bemoan upon your breast. It was an intentionally long-drawn-out leave-taking from you. ” Kafka’s hesitant take on authority- his capability to respect it, rebel against it, and blame himself for everything seems to come mostly from his relationship with his father. Always disturbed by feelings of inferiority to his father, Kafka also faced his father’s disapproval of his writing, which Hermann thought was a waste of time, never hesitant to throw it at his son that he thought he was a disappointment. The letter is a masterpiece, reflecting to everything he had written in which a protagonist struggled with a superior power and cautiously sorted every aspect of his view of their relationship. The letter, which he gave to his mother to pass on, never reached its addressee.

One main difference is that in “ Letter to My Father” Kafka courageously admits “ behind everything that I have written there was of course always a struggle with you. ” Kafka’s letter is an accusation filled with near-hate for his own father. The letter tells of the reprimand he received for irritating his father one night, by relentlessly asking for a drink of water. His father locked him out of the house for a short time. Although the punishment wasn’t violent, nor did his father leave him outside, Kafka’s sensitive character was forever marked. “ Even years afterwards I suffered from the tormenting fancy that the huge man, my father, the ultimate authority, would come almost for no reason at all and take me out of bed in the night and carry me out.

” The bewilderment for Kafka, the devoted son and emotional victim, is confirmed in the words. Kafka directly attacks one of the most important

<https://assignbuster.com/franz-kafka-and-his-father-relationship/>

people in his life, knowing that in doing so he is also attacking himself with shame. Unlike “ Letter to My Father”, “ The Metamorphosis” is an indirect portrait of Kafka’s life. It is an explanation of the dramatic changes that had taken place throughout his life (symbolic of his own life and nightmare-like life experiences he had with his father.) Franz Kafka is greatly known for unfolding bizarre situations with simple, cold words.

Kafka did not try to surprise readers with detailed descriptions of ghastly scenes; instead, Kafka preferred blunt absurdity. Consider the plain bluntness of the first sentence: “ As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect. With the opening of the story, we meet Gregor, a young commercial traveler. Kafka describes the tedious, murky and muggy environment that foreshadows the decomposition and fall of Gregor’s life. When Gregor opens his eyes, he finds himself changed into a grotesque vermin or an enormous insect, an insignificant creature.

Gregor does not scream. He does not panic at least not until he worries about going to work, that a gigantic insect doesn’t need to bother showing up for work doesn’t cross his mind. It seems as though Gregor accepts his fate so willingly. With this striking opening, Kafka sets his mystifying psychological fantasy in motion. Kafka’s diaries and letters point out that he considered “ Gregor’s fate no worse, or better, than that of any person. ” The prior life of a traveling salesman vs.

the one-room Gregor occupies, as an insect are both lives of solitude. Kafka wrote that “ the cares we have to struggle with every day” are emotional

anguish. Kafka lived a sad life. He was persistently haunted by the oppressive image of his father. This could be clearly seen in Gregor's attempts to get out of the bed. But, since his door was locked, he would need to call for help, which he does not favor.

This shows Kafka's fear of his father. He would rather lay on the bed forever than call his father to help him. Kafka's fear estimated here as Gregor's fear of Mr. Samsa's help, is clearly, knowingly or unknowingly, projected in his many literary works. Kafka lived in the shadow of his dominating father under continuous pressure to take over the family business. Hermann always viewed Franz as a failure and disapproved of his writing.

Before the metamorphosis of Gregor, he used to work and support the entire family. However, after the metamorphosis, he was completely unnoticed and was never given any significance. He was left alone in a room for dead. His family never acknowledged his efforts in supporting the family, and never considered what he may want or need. This may be an account of the mishaps in Kafka's life.

Even the end of the story is not just the usual end as may be predictable. In "The Metamorphosis", Kafka reflects upon many of the negative phases of his personal life through Gregor, both emotionally and physically. It is quite apparent in more ways than one that he was writing a twisted story of his life. *The emotional and physical abuse Gregor goes through are similar to what Kafka went through in real life.*

They were both abused and neglected by their fathers when they were disappointed with them. Kafka uses Gregor transforming into a bug as a way

<https://assignbuster.com/franz-kafka-and-his-father-relationship/>

of amplifying himself, trying to express his feelings and point of view. When writing, Kafka felt as if he was trapped in his room, which he referred to as “the noise headquarters of the apartment”. Gregor was an example of this because he could not leave the house to escape the noises and abuse. “The Judgment,” starts with a young man, Georg, writes a letter to tell his close friend who lives in Russia of his engagement to a young woman from a well-placed family.

Essentially, Georg had mailed three letters beforehand telling his friend about wedding plans of an insignificant couple from town. Georg hasn't revealed that it is actually he who is getting married yet. Georg's friend moved to Russia to conduct business. Sadly, the friend's endeavors are failing.

Out of compassion, Georg hasn't revealed of his own progressive good fortunes to his friend. Before sending out the letter, Georg checks on his father, a man who once was imposing but now ill and senile. The story then becomes a recounting of the last conversation between father and son. The conversation starts with the father, admitting to a bad memory wanting to know if Georg really has a friend in St. Petersburg. After Georg tells of his friend's move to Russia, his father proclaims that he does indeed remember the friend.

Georg's father states, “Of course I know your friend. He would have been a son after my own heart.” This slightly spiteful statement is conveyed by the exposure that Georg's father knows that his son has been “lying” to the friend. The father's fury makes no sense, since the friend is a failing

businessman, while Georg has turned his father's business into a growing enterprise. Unexpectedly, Georg's father proclaims that his son is marrying only because Georg has slept with the woman.

Even worse, Georg's father discloses that he has been writing to Georg's friend throughout the past few years. Although it might seem sensible to question the " judgment" of Georg's father, he has stolen a friendship and threatens to destroy his son's wedding plans. The father's tirade ends with " I sentence you now to death by drowning. " mortified by his father, Georg take off from the house, runs to a bridge, and throws himself into the river.

Kafka describes Georg's last act: " He swung himself over, like the distinguished gymnast he had once been in his youth, to his parents' pride. " Strangely enough, Georg's last statement is, " Dear parents, I have always loved you, all the same. " The judgment in this case is the judgment of a father upon his son. " The constant Oedipal struggle evident in Kafka is brought brutally to the surface here.

The odd incident in the father's room symbolizes this Oedipal " permission-seeking, the denial of permission and the resultant life-in-death as the son's psyche returns to the dark flow of the river and accepts that other releases are forbidden him. " (Butler, Lance, 1994) When reading " A Letter to My Father", it feels as if you're eavesdropping on an intensely personal and difficult conversation, " Dearest Father, You once asked me why I claim to be afraid of you. I did not know as usual, what to answer, partly out of my fear of you and partly because the cause of this fear consists of too many details for me to put even halfway into words. And if I try to answer you in writing

here, it will be only very incomplete anyway, because even in writing my fear and its consequences inhibit me toward you, and because the magnitude of the material far exceeds my memory and my understanding. ” Kafka describes how his feelings have been influenced by his father’s personality and manner of bringing him up.

The fear Kafka refers to is not that of physical abuse, his father wasn’t violent. He was scared of having to co-exist with someone of such a different personality and attempt to live in such close proximity with his father, who was loud, self-confident and domineering. Where as, Franz felt weak in comparison. Franz viewed his father as a tyrant, but continuously compared himself to him and came up short. Regardless of the fact that Kafka was in his thirties when he wrote this, at times it takes on the tone of a bit of a teenage whine; he notes the hypocrisy his father showed towards him, criticizing him but not then living up to the standards he set for his son, without any understanding that his father may be showing simple human imperfection.

However, it seems like he is unable to see his father as just a human being; he is always the overpowering presence to him that he was during childhood. His father attempted to bring his son up to be strong, and believed he could do this by bullying, and in this way force him to stand up to him. Instead, Franz turned in on himself and felt powerless and unable to escape from his father’s influence, apart from, to a small extent, through his writing. He discusses his various attempts at marriage, at how he saw this as a way for him to escape the tyranny of this relationship, but that in the end he could not, because marriage was his father’s territory, and therefore not for him.

<https://assignbuster.com/franz-kafka-and-his-father-relationship/>

It is a sad document in many ways, Kafka and his father's relationship does not seem to have matured into a relationship between two adults; he is constantly the child, with his father still attempting to bring him up. I felt a little sorry for his father if he had read this letter and its accusations, because it is apparent from Kafka's descriptions that it was not hatred that drove him to dominate his son so but his personality and a belief that he was bringing his children up correctly, but apparently he never did read it. The letter was not published until after Kafka's death. It appears to be a way of dealing with the relationship and his guilt, to put it on paper perhaps in an attempt to escape the influence his father had over him. The author's skillful use of metaphors and symbols to communicate may have had little or no affect on his father and their relationship, as he still felt compelled to write a long personal letter plainly stating his feelings.

Although Franz intended for the letter to reach his father, it was never sent to him instead his mother returned it to Franz. Ironically, even in his straightforward attempt, Franz had failed, though; in a sense his father did read the letter by reading most of his son's work. The fact that he died only a few years later, long before his father did, seems to have been eerily foreshadowed in *The Metamorphosis*. Franz Kafka seems to have thought that some of the most liberating occurrences are those that are beyond one's control.

Kafka could be known for his theme of alienation. You could easily identify the alienation in all three pieces of writing, for example, Gregor Samsa who wakes up one morning in his family home to find he is a huge insect (*The Metamorphosis*), perhaps this was in part a reflection of his feeling as a part

<https://assignbuster.com/franz-kafka-and-his-father-relationship/>

of his family. As with Gregor Samsa, Franz could not escape the inevitable. Gregor's transformation was an "escape from his oppressive life.

But even as an escape, it is not very successful, for to maintain his life as a carefree, wall-climbing insect, he needs others to care for him: to bring him his food and to clean his room. (Goldfarb, Sheldon, 2001) While Kafka's fictional writings may have served as a means of "escape" from a direct confrontation with his father, he could not escape his self-contempt. The only way for him to deal with his problems was to release himself in his writings. This type of behavior could have also made him vulnerable to illness, which eventually resulted in his death.

Franz wrote in his "letter to his father", that in order to escape his father he would have to escape his whole family, resulting in his self-transformation into a beetle named Gregor. The Metamorphosis may have been an interpretation of an attempt to escape his life. His friend and biographer Max Brod points out that the Kafka from this letter is not the Kafka he knew, though; the man he knew was bright and fun. "A Letter to My Father" shows just one side of him, a side that was not meant for public view. "Letter to My Father," is an autobiographical, distinct and ruthless address to his father of his feelings and emotions that had built up throughout his years. "The Metamorphosis and The Judgment," were short fictional stories, which were discretely based on the experiences and relationship of Kafka's life.

Kafka himself attributed much of his outlook on life to the affects of the relationship with his father. His work was fraught with cold; authoritarian figures that mistreated and threatened for reasons hardly understood and

often unexplained; a situation, which perfectly summed up Kafka's childhood sense of his own father. "Letter to My Father, The Metamorphosis, and The Judgment," three pieces of literary work by Franz Kafka, all leading back to the struggle that Kafka had with a significant person in his life who terrorized him endlessly, his father. References: <http://www.pitt.edu/~kafka/kafkabiography.html> <http://www.notablebiographies.com/Jo-Ki/Kafka-Franz.html> <http://www.wsu.edu/~delahoyd/20th/kafka.html> <http://www.aranea.co.nz/HTM/Kafka.htm> §Butler, Lance St. John, "The Judgment: Overview" in Reference Guide to Short Fiction, 1st ed. , St. James Press, 1994. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=22=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420004475=kafka=278447 § Goldfarb, Sheldon, Critical Essay on "The Metamorphosis," Short Stories for Students, Vol. 2, The Gale Group, 2001. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=32=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420035801=kafka=278447 § Aldiss, Brian W. , " Franz Kafka: Overview" in St. James Guide to Science Fiction Writers, 4th ed. , St. James Press, 1996. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=16=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420004468=kafka=278447

<http://www.pitt.edu/~kafka/kafkabiography.html> <http://www.notablebiographies.com/Jo-Ki/Kafka-Franz.html> <http://www.wsu.edu/~delahoyd/20th/kafka.html> <http://www.aranea.co.nz/HTM/Kafka.htm> §Butler, Lance St. John, "The Judgment: Overview" in Reference Guide to Short Fiction, 1st ed. , St. James Press, 1994. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=22=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420004475=kafka=278447 § Goldfarb, Sheldon, Critical Essay on "The Metamorphosis," Short Stories for Students, Vol. 2, The Gale Group, 2001. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=32=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420035801=kafka=278447 § Aldiss, Brian W. , " Franz Kafka: Overview" in St. James Guide to Science Fiction Writers, 4th ed. , St. James Press, 1996. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=16=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420004468=kafka=278447

<http://www.pitt.edu/~kafka/kafkabiography.html> <http://www.notablebiographies.com/Jo-Ki/Kafka-Franz.html> <http://www.wsu.edu/~delahoyd/20th/kafka.html> <http://www.aranea.co.nz/HTM/Kafka.htm> §Butler, Lance St. John, "The Judgment: Overview" in Reference Guide to Short Fiction, 1st ed. , St. James Press, 1994. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=22=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420004475=kafka=278447 § Goldfarb, Sheldon, Critical Essay on "The Metamorphosis," Short Stories for Students, Vol. 2, The Gale Group, 2001. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=32=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420035801=kafka=278447 § Aldiss, Brian W. , " Franz Kafka: Overview" in St. James Guide to Science Fiction Writers, 4th ed. , St. James Press, 1996. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=16=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420004468=kafka=278447

<http://www.pitt.edu/~kafka/kafkabiography.html> <http://www.notablebiographies.com/Jo-Ki/Kafka-Franz.html> <http://www.wsu.edu/~delahoyd/20th/kafka.html> <http://www.aranea.co.nz/HTM/Kafka.htm> §Butler, Lance St. John, "The Judgment: Overview" in Reference Guide to Short Fiction, 1st ed. , St. James Press, 1994. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=22=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420004475=kafka=278447 § Goldfarb, Sheldon, Critical Essay on "The Metamorphosis," Short Stories for Students, Vol. 2, The Gale Group, 2001. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=32=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420035801=kafka=278447 § Aldiss, Brian W. , " Franz Kafka: Overview" in St. James Guide to Science Fiction Writers, 4th ed. , St. James Press, 1996. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=16=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420004468=kafka=278447

<http://www.pitt.edu/~kafka/kafkabiography.html> <http://www.notablebiographies.com/Jo-Ki/Kafka-Franz.html> <http://www.wsu.edu/~delahoyd/20th/kafka.html> <http://www.aranea.co.nz/HTM/Kafka.htm> §Butler, Lance St. John, "The Judgment: Overview" in Reference Guide to Short Fiction, 1st ed. , St. James Press, 1994. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=22=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420004475=kafka=278447 § Goldfarb, Sheldon, Critical Essay on "The Metamorphosis," Short Stories for Students, Vol. 2, The Gale Group, 2001. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=32=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420035801=kafka=278447 § Aldiss, Brian W. , " Franz Kafka: Overview" in St. James Guide to Science Fiction Writers, 4th ed. , St. James Press, 1996. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=16=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420004468=kafka=278447

http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=22=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420004475=kafka=278447 § Goldfarb, Sheldon, Critical Essay on "The Metamorphosis," Short Stories for Students, Vol. 2, The Gale Group, 2001. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=32=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420035801=kafka=278447 § Aldiss, Brian W. , " Franz Kafka: Overview" in St. James Guide to Science Fiction Writers, 4th ed. , St. James Press, 1996. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=16=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420004468=kafka=278447

http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=22=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420004475=kafka=278447 § Goldfarb, Sheldon, Critical Essay on "The Metamorphosis," Short Stories for Students, Vol. 2, The Gale Group, 2001. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=32=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420035801=kafka=278447 § Aldiss, Brian W. , " Franz Kafka: Overview" in St. James Guide to Science Fiction Writers, 4th ed. , St. James Press, 1996. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=16=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420004468=kafka=278447

http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=22=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420004475=kafka=278447 § Goldfarb, Sheldon, Critical Essay on "The Metamorphosis," Short Stories for Students, Vol. 2, The Gale Group, 2001. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=32=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420035801=kafka=278447 § Aldiss, Brian W. , " Franz Kafka: Overview" in St. James Guide to Science Fiction Writers, 4th ed. , St. James Press, 1996. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=16=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420004468=kafka=278447

http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=22=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420004475=kafka=278447 § Goldfarb, Sheldon, Critical Essay on "The Metamorphosis," Short Stories for Students, Vol. 2, The Gale Group, 2001. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=32=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420035801=kafka=278447 § Aldiss, Brian W. , " Franz Kafka: Overview" in St. James Guide to Science Fiction Writers, 4th ed. , St. James Press, 1996. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?vrsn=3&contains=nysl_me_touro=athr=1=16=16=512=2&arp=U13007810=10=H1420004468=kafka=278447

<https://assignbuster.com/franz-kafka-and-his-father-relationship/>