

The use of alienation in the metamorphosis essay sample

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



Franz Kafka's use of social commentary in the novella *The Metamorphosis* illuminates destructive effects of alienation through Gregor's life before and after his transformation into a monstrous vermin and the reactions of his family members on his new body. When Gregor's body, once a normal humanly figure, begins to change, he finds no purpose to his being as he is incapable of moving out of bed for work. In addition to his body transformation, Gregor also begins to lose his sense of humanity in result of his weakening relationships between his family members. Even before the metamorphosis occurs, Kafka shows Gregor's feeling of being distanced from his family when he reflects on his life as a traveling salesman.

Kafka brings about a sense of Gregor's imprisonment from the outside world when Gregor comes to realization that he is no longer capable of carrying out his normal human routine. At first, Gregor starts to worry about being late for work and as time goes on he realizes that his body is no longer human. Gregor's absurd sense of neglect of his transformation helps prove that he is now living a pointless life of a bug. Kafka also points out to the reader that since Gregor can no longer serve and protect his family by paying off their debt, Gregor is exiled in his room, imprisoned from society. Kafka shows this theme of isolation when Gregor "[crawls] up the window sill and, propped up in the chair, [leaning] against the window, evidently in some sort of remembrance of the feeling of freedom he used to have from looking out the window" (Kafka 28). Not only does Gregor's new body cast him from society, but his family also neglects him in their normal routine.

Gregor and his family become increasingly distant from each other as his family members leave him locked in his room when he transforms into an evil insect. The theme of alienation shines true when Gregor's mother is not able to look at her son because of his repulsive body. His mother cannot bare the sight of his insect form as Gregor shows himself to her and the rest of his family. This is evident when "[Gregor] could not resist snapping his jaws several times in the air. At this his mother screamed once more, fled from the table, and fell into the arms of his father" (Kafka 17). Kafka shows the family's limiting acceptance of Gregor's alienated body when Gregor has to crawl underneath his couch and crush his body in order for Grete and his mother to move the furniture to give him more room for his insect lifestyle.

Even though he and his sister have been close throughout the years, their relationship weakens as she is no longer able to carry out the task of feeding him every day. Kafka shows that even the greatest bonds can be broken by estrangement especially when Grete can no longer stand being held responsible for taking care of her brother. Grete exclaims, " I won't pronounce the name of my brother in front of this monster, and so all I say is: we have to try and get rid of it. We've done everything humanly possible to take care of it" (Kafka 48). When Grete refers to Gregor as " it" she furthers the point that Gregor's humanity is taken away by his metamorphosis.

Shortly after waking and discovering that he has become a bug, Gregor reflects on his life as a traveling salesman, noting how superficial his relationships have become. His constant traveling limits the time he spends

with his family and the decency of his conversations with his mother and father. Kafka reveals Gregor's initial pride of supporting his family as becoming an expectation of his family members and in result he begins to feel increasingly distant from his parents. Even though Gregor does not wish to be a salesman, his family needs him for their survival. He demonstrates his frustration when he says, " if I didn't hold back for my parents' sake, I would have quit long ago, I would have marched up to the boss and spoken my piece from the bottom of my heart" (Kafka 4). Kafka displays the artificial relationship held between Gregor and his family because if they did not accept him into their family, they would not have the resources to provide for themselves.

The damaging effects of alienation are emphasized in the novella *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka's display of weakening relationships in Gregor's family and in Gregor's loss of humanity. The full body transformation that Gregor goes through creates a feeling of confinement as he begins to adapt to his new style of life as an insect. Furthermore, Kafka shows the distancing between Gregor and his family and how they close him out from their conversations and go on living without thinking too much about his death and all that he has done for the family. Kafka's emphasis on Gregor's seclusion from his family and society expresses how essential bonds and relationships with family and friends are to an individual's survival.