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Literature Teaching Unit

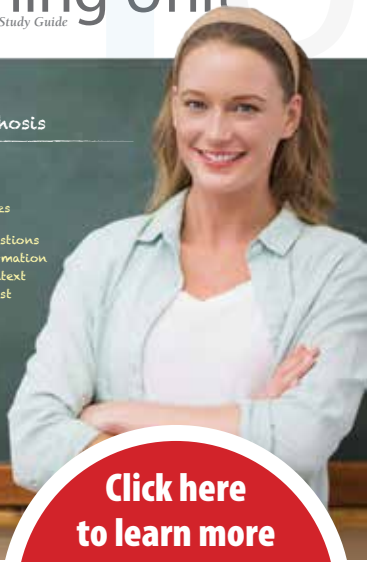
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



The Metamorphosis

by Franz Kafka

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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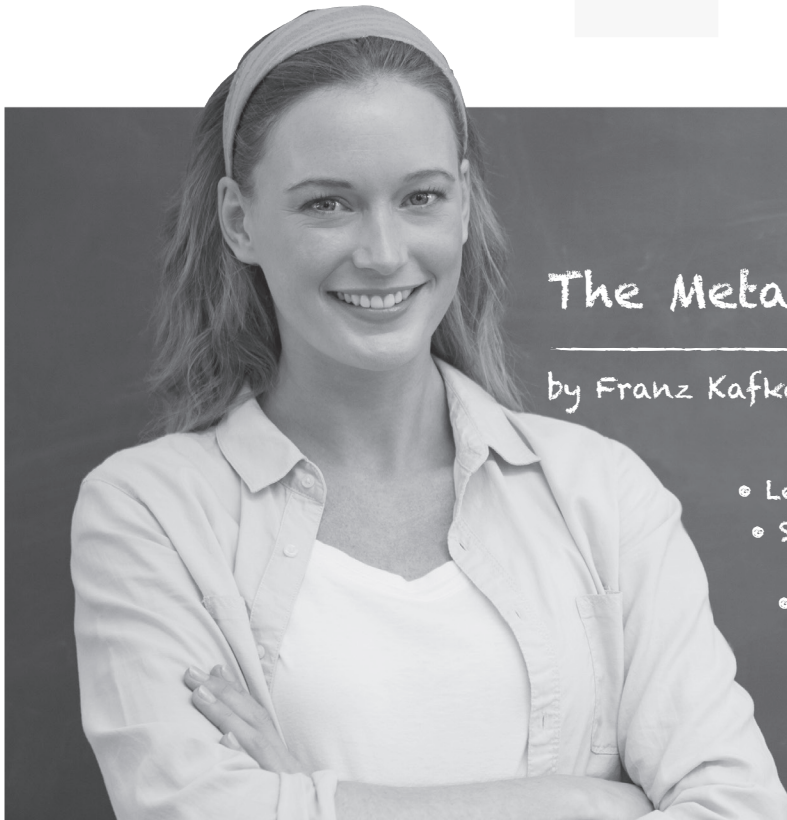
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Item No: 300670

Objectives

By the end of the Unit, the student will be able to:

1. recall the literal events of the stories, outlining the major sequences of action.
2. write a character profile for Gregor's parents and point out the changes that take place in them.
3. discuss the function in the story of Gregor's supervisor, the big boss, and the company porter who meets the train.
4. identify the major symbols in the story and interpret them.
5. note and comment on the significance of the groupings of three in *The Metamorphosis*.
6. explain how Gregor Samsa is used by the author to represent "the modern everyman."
7. define the term "allegory" and state to what extent this story may, or may not, be considered allegorical.
8. trace the changes that take place in Grete, the sister, and comment on the significance of the last sentence in the story, in regard to her.
9. discuss the extent to which this may be the story of Grete, the emerging artist.
10. support or refute the contention that, as some critics contend, this novel is timeless and universal.
11. give reasons why Kafka, despite the apolitical nature of his writing, is often celebrated as an especially effective critic of totalitarianism and its faceless bureaucracy.
12. draw a generalization regarding Kafka's view of capitalism and support that generalization by citing incidents from the stories.
13. explain how Kafka creates an air of verisimilitude in *The Metamorphosis*.

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. While there is no apparent reason for it, Kafka clearly put people, events, and things in groups of three. Identify as many of those groupings as you can.
2. While Gregor's metamorphosis gives the story its title, discuss the other metamorphoses which occur in this story.
3. In what ways may this story be seen as a criticism of capitalism?
4. In what ways may it be seen as an attack on personal and political tyranny?
5. A point of disagreement in the interpretation of Kafka's work is whether Kafka's obscure, symbolic works were in fact profound existential or religious allegories, or, as he expressed it, only about his "own dreamlike inner life." State your opinion and support it by referring to the text.
6. In what sense is Gregor a modern everyman?
7. Identify the significance of the sister's final action and point out how this relates to the story.
8. Identify and discuss the possible symbolism involved in the following:
 - the picture
 - the father's uniform
 - Gregor's transformation
 - Gregor's big boss
9. Point out how Kafka is able to make something that is impossible seem plausible.
10. The term allegory, which is sometimes used to describe this book, is associated with religion, yet there are not any significant references to churches or religion in this story. Discuss one possible way this story may be construed by some to be a religious or existential allegory.
11. Support or refute the idea that in the persons of Grete, we have the story of an emerging artist.
12. For what reason do you suppose some people describe this story as timeless or universal?
13. Consider the characters of Mr. Samsa, Mrs. Samsa, and Grete. Describe what they are like before Gregor's metamorphosis and what they are like after the change. Support or contradict this statement: The ties of blood are not strong enough to overcome the egocentric needs of the individual.

The Metamorphosis

Chapter I

VOCABULARY

abraded – worn or scraped off
admonish – warn
caprices – whims
enmeshed – tangled in
exhortations – encouragements
gilt – gold painted
girth – circumference
harbinger – indication
idee´ fixe – obsession
indisposition – slight illness
lamenting – showing sorrow
obliquely – diagonally
obstinate – stubborn
supine – horizontal
tribulation – suffering

1. How does Gregor feel about the people he meets in his workplace?

2. Why does Gregor not quit his job if he hates it?

3. What does the boss represent?

14. Why is Gregor having such a difficult time getting out of bed?

15. How does time create an element of anxiety in Gregor’s life?

16. How does this passage from pages 16-17 create an air of verisimilitude?

It was very easy to throw aside the blanket; he needed only to push himself up a little, and it fell by itself. But to continue was difficult, particularly because he was so unusually wide. He needed arms and hands to push himself upright. In the place of these, however, he had only a lot of little legs, which were incessant in their various motions and which, moreover, he was unable to control. If he wanted to bend one of them, then it was the first to stretch itself out, and meanwhile, if he finally succeeded in doing what he wanted with this limb, all the others, as if left free, moved around in an excessively painful agitation. “But I must not stay in bed uselessly,” (Pg. 16-17)

17. How does this next paragraph further emphasize verisimilitude?

At first he wanted to get out of bed with the lower part of his body, but this lower part—which, by the way, he had not yet looked at and which he also couldn’t clearly imagine—proved itself too difficult to move. The attempt went so slowly. When, having become almost frantic, he finally hurled himself forward with all his force and without thinking, he chose his direction incorrectly, and he hit the lower bedpost hard. The burning pain he felt taught him that the lower part of his body was, at the moment, perhaps the most sensitive. (Pg. 17)

Chapter II

VOCABULARY

ascertain – determine
asphyxia – difficulty breathing
beneficent – helpful
casement – window frame
dissuaded – advised against
invocations – calls for help or support
pallidly – palely
pronounced – obvious
sojourn – short stay
swoonlike – as in a faint

1. In the first paragraph of this section what do we learn of Gregor's health?

2. Some critics suggest that Gregor's growing appreciation of his antennae and his loss of interest in milk hints at Gregor's loss of humanity. Would you agree or disagree?

3. Do you see any significance in the fact that Gregor must crawl under the couch to feel comfortable?

4. At this point, Gregor tries to be as considerate as possible to his family for the unpleasantness that his metamorphosis has caused them. Is this consistent with his earlier attitude toward the family?

