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Reflections: A Student Response Journal



The Metamorphosis
Franz Kafka



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Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

The Metamorphosis

1. Gregor wakes up from “troubled dreams” and realizes he has been transformed into “an enormous bug.” At first he believes that it is all a dream but after he sees his newly formed body and insect-like legs, he realizes it is real. Have you ever wished you could be transformed into something or someone else? Write a journal entry describing who or what you would transform into and why.
2. Gregor says, “If it weren’t for my parents I would have quit [my job] long ago. I would have walked right up to the boss and let my heart out to him.” Have you ever been so dissatisfied with your job that you wanted to tell your boss that you quit? What stopped you?
3. Gregor thinks that if he goes back to sleep “and forgot all this foolishness” he will wake up and things would be back to normal. It is almost as if he thought forgetting about his current situation would make it just go away. Write a letter as an advice columnist explaining to Gregor that people can’t just forget to make their problems go away.
4. Gregor has to travel for his job. Describe the last trip that you took alone, with family or with friends. What made traveling difficult? How did important aspects like time, the mode of transportation, and money affect your trip?

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9. The chief clerk comes to Gregor's house and accuses him of "neglecting his business duties." The statement is untrue. Gregor is appalled that someone would even consider this possibility and tries to defend himself through his bedroom door. Has anyone ever unjustly accused you of something you didn't do? Compose a letter to that person describing your feelings about the false accusations.
10. When Gregor's voice changed, and his family and the chief clerk could not understand what he was trying to convey to them, the communication problem made an already confusing situation even worse. Write an article for a magazine about the importance of good communication in any type of relationship. Use examples from your own life showing where you have faced communication barriers and how you overcame them.
11. Gregor faces enormous difficulties due to his physical transformation. If you suffered a serious physical impediment, such as blindness or losing a limb, how might your life be affected? Choose an impediment and describe its impact on your family, your lifestyle, and your future.
12. Gregor says that his father's fixation was to get him back into his room. The older man becomes so focused on getting Gregor out of sight, that he forgets that Gregor is not merely an insect but is his son. The father then begins to hit him. Explain to a classmate who just doesn't understand how this lack of concern from a father to a son could occur.

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17. Gregor feels that his family became accustomed to his supporting them and began to take it for granted that he would always continue to do so. After a while, they no longer generated warm feelings or truly appreciated it when he handed over his paycheck to them. Now that he cannot continue to work, they begin to realize all that he had done for them in the past. Write a letter to his family and explain your feelings about their treatment of Gregor.
18. Instead of paying off the debt owed to Gregor's boss, his father saved some of each of Gregor's paychecks. In retrospect, it is a good thing he did this, as it allows the family to live off of the interest for a while. Compose an article for the financial section of the local newspaper about the importance of saving money. What you write certainly does not have to depend on your knowledge of details about finances; you already know the value of saving.
19. Gregor feels a great deal of gratitude toward his sister for the kindness she showed him after he changed into a bug, but he couldn't express it properly. Have you ever wanted to thank someone but didn't know how to express your thanks? Write an e-mail to that person conveying your appreciation.
20. Gregor eventually becomes worried that he will completely forget his human past. This is easy to understand, given his present existence as an insect. Some people would rather forget their past and move on. Others like to remember the past, and become fixated on it so they can learn from those experiences. Which type of person are you? Write an essay on the type of person you are for an issue of the school paper.

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34. Gregor's sister says, "It's impossible for people to live side by side with an animal like that, and [he] would have gone away of his own free will," meaning that Gregor doesn't care about them at all. Write Gregor's response to his sister's comment.
35. When Gregor is first transformed into the bug, his family is fairly supportive of him and tries to make him comfortable. They, particularly his sister, continue to regard him as part of the family. Grete takes care of his food and cleans his room. After times passes, however, Gregor's family views him as a burden and no longer calls him by name but refers to him as an "it." Do you think this is fair after he has supported them financially for years? Write a persuasive paragraph defending your answer.
36. Toward the end of the story, it says that Gregor is barely eating his food, perhaps in an attempt to starve himself to death or to obtain attention from his family. Have you ever done anything drastic to get attention? If so, what did you do? Write a journal entry describing what you did and if it was successful or not.
37. Gregor's family is relieved when he dies, but they also mourn his death by crying. Some people are proponents of assisted suicide because it ends the dying person's pain. Although they miss that person greatly, they are relieved that the sick one is no longer in pain. Write an editorial about your opinion on the topic of assisted suicide. Remember that, unlike a newspaper article, this editorial expresses your opinion in an attempt to persuade others over to see the correctness of your views.