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Blog/Reading Response Assignment

A brief discussion on 'The Metamorphosis' by Franz Kafka



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How a book simply changed my out and out perception of looking at life and society.

Bibliographic Information: [1] F. Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*. London: Feedbooks,1912, 54pp

Type of book: *Allegoric Fiction*.

Introduction & Background

The metamorphosis by Franz Kafka is considered one of the best allegoric novels of all time.

Where the writer through his writing explored the derivation and nuance of human emotions and how it changes with changing circumstances. Through deciphering, Kafka can prove to be really troublesome even for elite psychoanalysts, but from what I understood is through this story Kafka blatantly expressed how a family responds to one of its family members who bears the burden of

responsibility of his family, on failing to that how it isolates and alienates him, and most importantly how it responds eventually to its sacrifice in a metaphorical way.

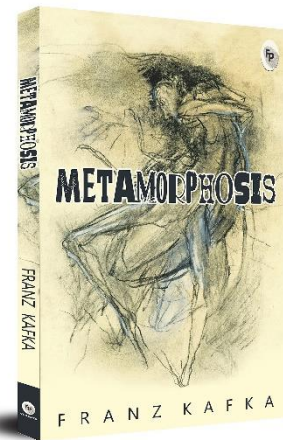


Figure 1: *Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka
source: <https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%>

Story Line

The story revolves around 'Gregor Samsa' the protagonist who is a salesman by profession. Who, on waking up one fine morning, learned that he has turned into monstrous vermin. As a result, his family started experiencing various kinds of problems from not being able to leave their home, not being able to shift to a comparatively smaller house, most importantly to earn their living, since the protagonist turned out into vermin and could not bear the burden of his family anymore. Even though primarily his beloved sister Grete was the only one willing to help him by bringing him food, cleaning his room, moving furniture from one place to another for his convenience. But from inside even, she even could not accept his brother's new identity. Happiness has become a thing of the distant past for them. One fine day while moving the furniture of Gregor's room for his convenience, his mother saw his newly formed body for the first time and got fainted. His sister rushes out of the room to get some aromatic spirits in order to bring back her; conscience and managed to do that successfully. On learning about this incident, his father got angry and started hurling apples at him which, wounded him severely. Days passed and, a sense of disownment of him had already started to develop in their minds. And finally, the day when he unknowingly scared the three male tenants whom his father had rented a room to is the day they finally; lost it. His very own sister proposed to his parents to get rid of the vermin. On listening to their conversation, the unfortunate, old, weak injured vermin got shattered. What happens finally after that and how the family responded to this is where the true story unfolds.

Discussion & literary devices

Through this allegoric piece of writing, Kafka tried to depict various range of motions of human nature or in some cases its ambiguity. There are numerous literary devices that Kafka had used in his writing that are worth mentioning and pondering about. The way he symbolized Gregor's dehumanizing, demotivated unhappy life to his transition into vermin is a unique way of asking his readers what do they think of their own lives. Besides this with the gradual development of the story it explores and depicts three different emotional layers of human beings. In the primary section, we get to see the perception of Gregor's family members, when they learned that the only bread earner of their family had turned into vermin. Henceforth to overcome their unprecedented financial crisis rather than being dependent on Gregor's income and with no options left each one of the rest of the family members started working and earning on their own. Here we can see a minor emotional transition of the characters and how their perception towards the turned into a vermin Gregor, who was the sole earner of the family even a few days ago changed. Finally, with time when they overcame all their crisis and problems without the help of Gregor or his money, the third layer of emotional transition. Where he (the protagonist Gregor) now being perceived as nothing but a matter of inconvenience, and with his sister saying "We must try to get rid of it," [1, p.43] to her father clearly shows that, even if they have to kill Gregor in order to get rid of him, they won't mind doing that, not even his beloved sister Grete. These three layers of human emotions are a blatant truth of our lives and societies which Kafka expressed allegorically. On the other hand, the author properly expressed the perception and point of view of Gregor towards his family, even after he turned into vermin. Gregor Samsa's

story is a metaphor for sacrifice. The terrible state that he was in was due to overwork and personal dissatisfaction, which he silently endured in order to give his family a life of comfort and security. Even to the last word of the story, the author categorically depicted Gregor's affection for his family. To fortify Gregor's perception and affection for his family the author gave the example of his clings to the framed photograph of the woman in fur when his sister and mother start removing furniture from his room. He could not stand the fact that everything was being removed from his room that he holds dear, just because he is not in human shape right now. Moreover, Kafka's expression of "Was he an animal that music so captivated him? For him, it was as if the way to the unknown nourishment he craved was revealing itself." [1, p.41] In order to show the protagonist's affection for his sister's music to his last day is the testament of Gregor's love and attachment towards his family. To sum it up it's a story that expresses the complexity of human relationships from happiness to death to immortality and the absurdity of life and the human condition. But what happens in the end? Did Gregor really get what he deserved? Or could Gregor really have escaped his fate had he been less passive in life? Are the questions that readers will ponder about, long after giving it a read. And these are the cliffhangers that provoked numerous psychologists to research this very work of Kafka.

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Views & Recommendations

This is the first work of Kafka that I read and I thoroughly enjoyed it. And there is a reason why this is considered one of the best and most acclaimed works of Kafka. In a published article by

'The Guardian' featuring Kafka's Metamorphosis on 18th July, 2015, it clearly states "Kafka's tale of a man who wakes to find he has changed into a giant insect still has the power to shock and delight a century after it was first published." [2] which goes to show the novel's sheer relevance in our lives even to this date. Besides this, the platform of the world's largest community of book lovers, 'Goodreads' is flooded with reviews where all other readers are also overwhelmed, as I am with Kafka's this very masterpiece. [3]. What I liked most about this book is the author's flair for using allegory to express the true colors of human emotions and societies blatantly. Despite being a small read this book has been one of the most thought-provoking books that I ever encountered in my entire life so far. The author's writing technique is lucid and engaging. He successfully depicted each and every character and their point of view through writing. Even though the language is easily understandable but really hard to decipher especially the inner meaning. And this is what had given me a hard time. And I had to give it a read a couple of times and reflect upon it for hours in order to decode the author's unique style of symbolism and allegories. But as long as the messages are as thought-provoking and intellect stimulating as such, I don't mind reading a book hundred times and this book had been a Pandora's box for me. On each perusal, I deciphered a new perspective and analogy. Therefore, I would recommend each and every one, whether he or she is a reader or non-reader to go through this novel at least once. It has the potential to change one's way of perceiving life upside down. And I am eagerly looking forward to reading more of Kafka in the future.

References

- [1] F. Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*. London: Feedbooks, 1912, 54pp
- [2] R. T. Kelly, "Kafka's Metamorphosis: 100 thoughts for 100 years," *The Guardian*, The Guardian, 18-Jul-2015.
- [3] Franz Kafka, Stanley Corngold (Translator), Mircea Ivănescu (Translator) et al., "The Metamorphosis," Goodreads.com. [Online]. Available: https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/485894.The_Metamorphosis. [Accessed: 20-Jun-2021].



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