

Summer Reading Assignment - Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*

PURPOSE

This year in English 4, we will be focusing on the significance of relationships - in the lives of the people we will read about as well as within our own lives. To get started looking at this issue, I would like to begin the year by reading about and examining the relationships in Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*.

BACKGROUND AND KEY QUESTIONS

Franz Kafka's weird novel - and believe me, it is a weird one - is about a man who wakes one morning having transformed into a gigantic beetle-like bug. While this is certainly significant, the author chooses to focus his attention instead on how the man and his family respond to this change. Consequently, the novel focuses much of its attention on human relationships.

After having read the novel, you should be able to answer the following questions:

1. What was Gregor's life like before the transformation?
2. How does Gregor respond to his change and his new life over the course of the novel?
3. How does the family respond to his change initially?
4. How does the family's response to Gregor and his transformation change over time?
5. What examples, besides Gregor's, are there of change in the novel?
6. If we were able to ask Kafka himself, how would he answer the following question: What is the power or importance of relationships?

ASSIGNMENT

When we return to school, you will be asked to write an essay that discusses the key questions above. In an effort to make sure you understand the novel and can find useful evidence to support your ideas, please read the novel and take notes in one of the ways below.

Option #1: In-novel Annotations

As you read take notes in the margins of your book:

- at the top or bottom of every two pages, briefly note the actions and events which have happened on that page;
- note details that help answer the questions above in the side margins of your novel (you should have something noted nearly every page).

Option #2: Journal Notes

As you read take notes on separate pages;

- on one set of separate pages, keep a running list of actions and events which occur - including the page numbers on which they happen (this list should be at least 20 items in length);
- using two column notes, take notes as you read about details which help answer the questions above; in the left-hand column, note an event or action or quotation (with the page number), and in the right-hand column, write a sentence or two about how that event, action or quotation addresses one of the key questions above (you should have something noted for every page of the novel).

FINAL NOTE

These notes - whether in your novel or on separate sheets of paper - will be collected and evaluated by me at the beginning of the school year. Please feel free to contact me at pdreisbach@lshigh.org over the summer if you are struggling with this assignment or the reading in general.

Happy Reading!

Mr. Dreisbach

Summer Reading Assignment - Sample Annotations

I have taken the opportunity to provide you samples of both options of annotations below. While your may not look like mine for every page of the novel, you should do your best to be thorough and developed as these notes and annotations will help you later when you need to write about this novel.

OPTION #1: In-novel Annotations

Gregor wakes; desc. of room
and weather

The Metamorphosis

Main
Character?

One morning, as Gregor Samsa was waking up from anxious dreams, he discovered that in his bed he had been changed into a monstrous vermin. He lay on his armor-hard back and saw, as he lifted his head up a little, his brown, arched abdomen divided up into rigid bow-like sections. From this height the blanket, just about ready to slide off completely, could hardly stay in place. His numerous legs, pitifully thin in comparison to the rest of his circumference, flickered helplessly before his eyes.

Why vermin?

sounds like
a bug to me

G's room

"What's happened to me," he thought. It was no dream. His room, a proper room for a human being, only somewhat too small lay quietly between the four well-known walls. Above the table, on which an unpacked collection of sample cloth goods was spread out—Samsa was a travelling salesman—hung the picture which he had cut out of an illustrated magazine a little while ago and set in a pretty gilt frame. It was a picture of a woman with a fur hat and a fur boa. She sat erect there, lifting up in the direction of the viewer a solid fur muff into which her entire forearm had disappeared.

Weird picture -
lady in fur?

the weather
depresses
him?

Gregor's glance then turned to the window. The dreary weather—the rain drops were falling audibly down on the metal window ledge—made him quite melancholy. "Why don't I keep sleeping for a little while longer and forget all this foolishness," he thought.

OPTION #2: Journal Notes

The list of actions and events can look like this:

pg. 1 - Gregor wakes, looks around room and worries about the weather

And the two column notes can look like this:

<p>pg. 1 - "changed into a monstrous vermin"</p>	<p>A vermin suggests that he is a nasty pest and monstrous means he is scary.</p>
<p>pg. 1 - weather makes him sad</p>	<p>Why would he be worried about the weather when he is a huge bug?</p>