

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

The Metamorphosis

by Franz Kafka

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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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5. Gregor works as a traveling salesman, a job he does not like, to pay off his father's debts. Have you ever done something that you did not particularly enjoy for someone else's benefit? What was it? Write a brief essay describing what you did for that person and how it benefited them.

6. Gregor has gotten into the habit of locking all his doors at night to ensure his privacy. Have you ever "locked" your doors? You could have literally locked your doors to keep out friends, parents, or siblings, or you could have locked the doors of your heart so that you couldn't be hurt. Write a poem about locking doors.

7. Gregor soon learns that it would have been easier on himself had he not locked the door to his room because someone could have come in to help him. We often find out that things we do as defense mechanisms end up hurting us. Make a list of at least five pros and cons of defense mechanisms that you use for self-protection.

8. When Gregor is trying to explain to the chief clerk that he is not feeling well, he says we often "have to overcome a slight indisposition out of regard for the business." In other words, "No pain, no gain." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Write a letter to the editor about your opinion using specific examples to back up your opinion.

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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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13. Gregor didn't appreciate his new antennae until he needed to start using them. Have you ever experienced the appreciation of something long after you received it? Write a diary entry to your future children about something they will probably take for granted but shouldn't because they will learn to appreciate it later in life. Examples might be exercise, reading, not smoking, etc.

14. Gregor mentions his faith in God and says that God has to be somewhere and couldn't have flown away and abandoned him. Write a poem about a time when you felt completely abandoned by someone you thought would always be by your side. If you've never felt that way, write a poem about someone who you know will always be by your side. There is no necessity for the poem to rhyme, but it certainly might if you choose.

15. After Gregor changed into a bug, his sister did more for him than anyone else in his life. She took care of him, gave him food and cleaned up after him. He would have surely died much sooner had it not been for her diligent care. There seems to be a bond between siblings that people can't explain. Compose a letter to a sibling with whom you feel that bond. If you are an only child or don't feel that bond with a brother or sister, write a letter to a sibling that you wish you had.

16. Gregor's family makes many sacrifices when it becomes clear that his condition is permanent. They stop going out together as a family, they all take demanding jobs, and they cut back on their hired help. What would you do to help your family? What would you sacrifice? Make a list of at least ten things you would be willing to sacrifice if it would help your family. From the list, choose one that is the most important and write a sentence or two explaining why.

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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.