

# THE METAMORPHOSIS

BY FRANZ KAFKA



## Education Resource Pack 2024



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## 2024 Education Resources

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**Mild Peril Theatre**

[www.mildperiltheatre.co.uk](http://www.mildperiltheatre.co.uk)

[info@mildperiltheatre.co.uk](mailto:info@mildperiltheatre.co.uk)

## About The Metamorphosis

The Metamorphosis is a novella written by Franz Kafka, first published in October 1915 in a German magazine called Die Weissen Blätter. A lot of Franz Kafka's stories were not published during his lifetime, but The Metamorphosis was one of the longest books which he considered to be completed.

Gregor Samsa is a travelling salesman, and one morning he wakes up to find that he has changed into a giant insect. At first he believes that he is just having a nightmare and tries to go back to sleep, but when he tries to move he realises that his body is not working the way he expects, and he realises that he has actually transformed.



Initially he wants to get up and carry on as normal: the main thing for Gregor is that he needs to go to work, as his family rely on him for money. Of course, this doesn't work (because he is now a giant insect), and he finds himself locked in his bedroom, unable to communicate with his family or to go about his life.

The reason for Gregor's metamorphosis is never explained, but through his recollections we are told about some of the parts of his life which have made him feel as though he doesn't fit in with other people, or understand the way the world works.

Gregor gradually becomes used to his new body, and as he does, he begins to think less of work, money, and the usual human things he spends his time worrying about, essentially allowing his mind to become less human. His family try to be helpful at first, everybody hoping that this situation might be temporary, but as time goes on they become less accepting of Gregor, and have to go through a number of changes themselves in order to survive.

Now that Gregor can't work or make money, his family have to get jobs for themselves, and find a position where they can support themselves, and not have to rely on anybody to look after them. Then, Gregor becomes a burden to them, and following a few incidents where Gregor escapes from his room, he becomes injured, and eventually starts to die.

Gregor's sister, Grete, reaches a point where she won't even mention his name, believing that the insect is just a monster, and there is nothing left of her brother. At this point Gregor accepts that he no longer has any purpose, that he has become nothing more than a burden, and he finally goes back to bed where he dies.

This is a relief to Gregor's family, who are now able to consider their future. After the changes in their income and living arrangements they have some money saved, and decide to move to a better flat, finally able to think about what they are going to do with their lives.



## About Franz Kafka



Franz Kafka was born in Prague, which is now in the Czech Republic, on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1883. His family were relatively well off, and he trained as a lawyer before going to work for an insurance company. He died of tuberculosis in 1924, and at that time hardly any of his writing had been published, and he was certainly not famous.

Kafka wrote in his spare time, and wrote hundreds of letters to his family and friends, but most of his books and stories have never been seen. He was riddled with self doubt, and burned most of what he wrote, believing that it was worthless.

After he died, he instructed his friend, Max Brod to destroy what was left of his writing. Brod ignored this and published the work, including *Amerika*, *The Trial*, and *The Castle*, which are now among Kafka's most famous novels. After World War II, these stories started to become well known, and in the 1960s, after they were translated from German, Kafka became famous worldwide.

Kafka suffered from ill health and struggled to form relationships for much of his life, and a lot of the main characters in his stories reflect this. He had a strained and very formal relationship with his father, and in his writing many of the authoritarian figures draw from this. He had close relationships with a number of girlfriends during his life, but he never married.

Kafka believed that people found him repulsive, both physically and mentally. However, many people who knew him and have written about him found him to be fascinating, handsome, intelligent and funny.

He feared abandonment and was highly dependant on those around him despite his struggles with anxiety and depression. It has been suggested that he may have had borderline personality disorder, transforming normal, healthy beliefs and wishes into ugly and twisted desires.

A lot of the things which Kafka struggled to understand about his life, and about himself, are shown in his writing. In *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor's inability to make personal connections with the people around him, and his transformation into a 'monstrous vermin' show this clearly. By understanding a little about Franz Kafka, we can better understand some of the things which Gregor goes through, and how he sees the other characters in the story.



## Adapting **The Metamorphosis**

Kafka wrote a lot about his characters finding themselves trapped in a society which have a huge amount of rules and structures which make little sense, but can't be avoided. Characters like Gregor Samsa generally represent Kafka himself, and they try to work within their society even though they don't understand it, and are ultimately doomed to fail.

The word '**Kafkaesque**' has become a way of describing a situation which is so complicated and nonsensical that we just end up being overwhelmed by what seem to be stupid rules designed to make it as difficult as possible to get anywhere, and to create a system which only really serves to keep the system itself going, even though it doesn't actually do what it is meant to do.

While Kafka wrote about a lot of very 'Kafkaesque' situations, like Gregor Samsa working as a salesman for a big company, or a character accused of a crime in *The Trial*, or a man trying to navigate the bureaucracy of an unfamiliar village in *The Castle*, the world today is probably much more Kafkaesque that it was in 1915.

We have a better understanding of how external factors can interact with our own minds now that ever before, and there are a lot of situations and influences which we deal with on a daily basis which can make us feel as though we are in a Franz Kafka story.

This was the starting point for this adaptation of *The Metamorphosis*: since Gregor is struggling to forge relationships with those around him, and as he just doesn't really understand the way the world works, he is very much like most of us today. The world he lives in in Prague in 1915 isn't any simpler than the world we live in today, and perhaps if Franz Kafka could see the world today, he would find a lot of things to write about.

The book is short, and begins at the point where Gregor wakes up having transformed into an insect. Then it follows the next few months of his life as he becomes more alienated from his family until he finally dies, essentially setting them free. The reasons for his metamorphosis are never really explained, but there are a lot of hints about why it has happened.

In adapting *The Metamorphosis* into a play, the first thing to do is to try to understand the characters and where they come from and what happens to them. Then we need to try to find the important parts of the story, and find those aspects which we want to explore further.





In the book there are a lot of questions, most of which are not answered, which means there are a range of things we can consider about Gregor:

**Does Gregor actually turn into an insect, or is it all a figment of his imagination?**

The idea of somebody physically transforming into something else is so bizarre and surreal, we just never really know exactly what kind of ‘monster’ Gregor becomes. The story is presented as if the actual metamorphosis is a fact, but it is told from Gregor’s point of view which might not be reliable. Is the insect real? Or is it all in Gregor’s mind?

**Why does Gregor transform?**

There are a number of things going on in Gregor’s life which make him feel worthless and alienated. As a travelling salesman he can’t spend time with anybody for long enough to become friends, but when he is at home with his family he can’t really talk openly with them. His family rely on his wage, so he cannot escape from the situation he is in. His manager and a lot of the situations he finds himself in make him feel like he doesn’t understand the world or the people in it, which makes him feel distant from humanity. In the story, Gregor eventually feels so worthless he actually transforms into a creature which he sees as disgusting and repulsive, but also something which people would ignore if they saw it scuttling around in the corner. This reflects Kafka’s own view of himself. What are some of the things in modern life which could make somebody feel this way?

**Are Gregor’s family the cause of his transformation?**

Again, this is not made clear, although part of Gregor’s problem is that he feels trapped by his situation. While Gregor has gradually settled into the role of provider for his family, they have also settled into their roles and have grown to just accept it. His family have come to rely on him, and to take him for granted, but does that make them bad people?



## When and where does the story take place?

As Gregor's story feels like it could be about any of us, and because the world today feels as though it is designed to make us feel the way Gregor feels in the book, the adaptation takes place in our time and in our world, and is intended to be no more specific than that.

## What makes Gregor turn into an insect?

Just like in the book, there isn't one specific cause for Gregor's transformation. But to look at the things which make him feel the way he does, some of the things from the book are explored in a bit more detail, and some aspects of modern life are looked at too.

## How do Gregor's family react?

Just like in the book, Gregor's family at first want to try to understand what has happened, and would like to be able to find a way to help him. But as time goes on they undergo their own transformations, and by the end they are very different characters from when we first find them. For example, Grete starts the story as a fairly naïve person who is content to let Gregor work hard in order to send her to music school. But by the end she has a job and money of her own, and although she hasn't abandoned her musical dreams completely, she is much better equipped to exist in the real world in a way Gregor was not. In a way, Gregor's metamorphosis causes his family to change, and to learn from his situation how to look after themselves.

## What is going on in Gregor's mind?

By understanding a bit about Franz Kafka it is a little easier to see how Gregor feels. Kafka felt that he was unpopular and repulsive, which was not true. Gregor feels the same way about himself, but in Gregor's world everything seems designed to reinforce this. So we see various people treat him unfairly, or refuse to help him, or to want to help him and be unable to. We also see situations where Gregor tries to get help but the system prevents it. While Gregor's mental health continues to deteriorate, he is confronted by rules and systems which make him feel stupid and worthless, and by people who try to make him feel as though he is getting everything wrong in order to protect themselves.

These are things which we all experience sometimes, and which can have the effect of making us doubt ourselves or our abilities. In this story, Gregor's family see what is happening to him but are unable to help. However, by learning from him during his metamorphosis they are able to protect themselves from experiencing similar difficulties.



## Characters

### Gregor Samsa

Gregor is a travelling salesman, and has found himself in a position where he is lonely, isolated, and by going about his daily routine he is made to feel more and more worthless and insignificant until he physically transforms into a being which he sees as being truly worthless and insignificant: an insect. Gregor clearly struggles with his mental health, and is unable to find a way of healing.

Gregor, despite his physical change, is the character who is most constant through the story. When we first meet him, he is resigned to just making the best of his situation, and even when he wakes up as a monster, he still tries to get up and go to work. He doesn't ask why or how he transformed, he just tries to become accustomed to his new body.

As he becomes more comfortable, his new insect body does affect his human mind, making him feel more comfortable hiding in the corner, even though he desperately wants to cling to the things which make him human.

In his room there is a photograph of Gregor in an army uniform. What does this suggest to you about him?

Gregor is very reluctant to ask for help, either from those around him or from 'the system.' Why do you think this might be?

Gregor's first thought when he realises he has turned into an insect is to get up and catch the train so he can work. Why do you think he feels this way?





## Grete Samsa

Grete is Gregor's younger sister, and at the beginning she loves him and wants to try to help him after his metamorphosis. Due to the strong bond they share before Gregor's metamorphosis, she quickly becomes his main carer. She has pity for him and tries to make his new life as bearable as possible by bringing him food and trying to make him comfortable. Grete is Gregor's only real connection to his family, and to humankind.

However, Grete is the character who changes the most during the story. As time goes on she becomes more independent and her care for her brother changes from being a kind act to a duty, and eventually she comes to resent him, and it. Eventually, Grete's attitude toward Gregor is the reason he realises that he no longer has a place in his family.

Grete eventually refuses to even say Gregor's name when referring to the insect. Why do you think this is?

Do you think Grete would have ever gone to music school? Was this something she wanted, or was it actually Gregor pushing this idea? Why do you think this way?

## Mr Samsa (Father)

Gregor's father starts the story as a fairly frail man who makes it clear that the family rely on Gregor's income. By the end he has been able to find a job of his own and has once again become independent. Gregor clearly has a strained relationship with his father, much like Franz Kafka did with his, and Mr Samsa is generally seen from Gregor's point of view; he has little sympathy for his son before the transformation, and afterward, the times he interacts with Gregor result in him attaching Gregor.

Why do you think Mr Samsa is quite dismissive of Gregor early in the story? How do you think he feels about being reliant on his son?

How do you think Mr Samsa feels about having to take charge of the family finances, and why does he become the person who forces Gregor back into his room when he escapes?



## The Doctor

The doctor wants to help Gregor, but he has to operate within a set of complex rules which mean he is unable to really understand what is going on. During his conversation with Gregor we see a number of areas where he repeats things, or is clearly not listening to what Gregor says. Earlier Gregor has a similar conversation with a medical helpline, and we cannot be sure if the person he is speaking to is real, or is an AI. This all serves to reinforce Gregor's belief that the system is not meant to help him, and he needs to find his own way to resolve whatever is going on.

What do you think are the risks and benefits of a system like Gregor experiences here? If more things become computerised, is this a good or a bad thing?

Computers can make unbiased decisions, but perhaps they cannot think 'outside the box.' Is this a good or a bad thing?

## Social Media

Although not a character, social media is something which is repeatedly present in Gregor's world. He doesn't understand it, and it makes him feel bad. He can see people enjoying social media technology, and can see people presenting their lives and achievements in a way which makes him feel as though he is failing at life.

What are the good and bad parts of social media? Do you think being connected to a large and unregulated source of information and entertainment is helpful?

If there are harmful aspects to our interaction with the world via social media, how can we protect ourselves?



## The Customer

Early on in the story Gregor goes to see a customer who is upset with him. Although it is not clear whether Gregor has actually done anything wrong, the customer uses a few techniques to confuse him and to try to convince him that he is remembering what happened incorrectly.

How does the customer try to confuse Gregor? Why do you think she does this?

## The Manager

Gregor's boss is also unhappy with Gregor because the Customer has made a complaint about him. The Manager is keen to protect the Company, and Gregor is seen as being less important than the value of the business which the Customer brings.

If Gregor had continued to work at the Company, how do you think it would have turned out, and why?

Do you think the Manager has already decided what she is going to do?

## Mr Francis

Mr Francis works for the Company, and appears to be sympathetic toward Gregor. However, Mr Francis works within a large and complex system, in a similar way to the Doctor. Also, Mr Francis has to work between Gregor and the Manager, and essentially has to find a way of making everybody working in the best interests of the Company.

Do you think Mr Francis actually cares about Gregor? What makes you think this?





## The Lodger

Gregor's family rent out a spare room to the Lodger in order to try to make some money. However, when Gregor escapes from his room the Lodger is repulsed by the monster living in the flat and threatens to claim money from the Samsas, as well as telling people what is going on. This causes a big confrontation in which Gregor realises how much of a burden he has become.

Why do you think Grete makes food for the Lodger, and treats him the way she does?

## The Cleaner

Mr Samsa hires a cleaner to keep on top of the dirt in Gregor's room. The Cleaner, unlike everybody else, does not seem to be scared of Gregor, and is actually the only person after his transformation who seems to be able to stand being in his presence. She doesn't exactly build a relationship with him, but she does not recoil from him when they first meet.

What do you think makes it possible for the Cleaner to accept Gregor as an insect when everybody else finds him repulsive and scary?

Although the Cleaner seems to have sympathy for Gregor, the way she treats him does not give him any human qualities. Why do you think this is?



## Themes in **The Metamorphosis**

### Absurdity and Surrealism

Clearly, the whole premise of Gregor's story is surreal and absurd. Nobody is actually going to turn into an insect, and when this happens in the story nobody questions it or asks why. It is as though all of the events happen in a strange, alternate reality where this kind of thing can actually happen.

Instead of worrying about how he has physically changed, Gregor worries about getting to work and continuing to provide for his family, suggesting that life as a whole is absurd.

The other characters don't try to cure Gregor, or to find out why this has happened; instead they try to accommodate the new situation and keep it secret in order to maintain a semblance of normality. This suggests that everybody in the story in some way accepts the surrealism of the situation, as if life is just like that sometimes.

### Mental and Physical Health

Although Gregor's body transforms completely, his mind is not changed by the event, suggesting a disconnection between the two. He continues to think the way he always has, and when Grete brings him some milk, which is said to be his favourite, he finds that he cannot physically stand the taste until it has turned sour. To begin with, he cannot reconcile his mind and body.

As he grows accustomed to his new body his mind begins to accept things which make him more comfortable, such as hiding in the corner or eating mouldy fruit, and when Grete thinks to remove his furniture he knows that this would make him more physically comfortable, even though he is unable to let go of his human belongings.

So he finds that he cannot be both mentally and physically comfortable, and he has to choose between the two.

When Gregor's physical health begins to fail, he appears to be more lucid and certain than at any point in the story. Certainly before the metamorphosis Gregor seems to be easily manipulated and gaslit by the Customer and the Manager, and clearly he is struggling at this point to keep his thoughts clear. He is full of contradictions, for example wanting to get a good night's sleep whilst believing that sleeping for too long will make him stupid and lazy.

In the first half of the play Gregor is struggling with feelings of isolation and loneliness, and he yearns to find a human connection somewhere. Another contradiction comes to light here: as a



travelling salesman he cannot talk to anybody for long enough to forge a friendship, but when he is at home with his family he cannot talk to them either.

Many of the people he comes into contact with demonstrate a range of reasons for Gregor to feel worthless and hopeless, from the more direct abuse of the Customer to the inflexibility of the Doctor. While he is in his human body Gregor accepts these things and allows them to affect him deeply, and only once he has transformed does he begin to think about the good things he does, and how much he has helped those around him.





## PSHRE

Using your own programmes of study, the following moments from the play are worth exploring:

### Respect

**GREGOR**

It won't be long now, maybe five or six years and we will have paid off the money we owe. Then we'll have a little spare each month, and perhaps I'll find something without so much travelling. Without worrying about train connections, bad meals at odd hours. Perhaps I could take a job where I could have a conversation with people who don't change every day, a conversation which might even last, maybe become cordial, or even friendly.

**FATHER**

*(Still looking at the newspaper)* You're going to be late for your train.

### Social Change

**GREGOR**

I think all of the documentation should be in place. I requested a price review, it was turned down, and I communicated this to the customer. It is very unfortunate that the customer has gone elsewhere but I fail to see why you are questioning me about this when you could have simply looked through the account.

**MANAGER**

I'm questioning you, Mr Samsa, because Mr Chairman is... vexed. And if Mr Chairman is vexed, this means I have to find answers. And quickly. The fault cannot lay with the management structure of the company, Mr Samsa. That's not how business works. If the management structure of the company were found to be inefficient or unsuitable then the company would simply cease to exist.



If management have made an incorrect decision, one which has damaged the business, then I can only surmise that the information upon which they based the decision must have been faulty. Do you see where I am coming from, Mr Samsa?

**GREGOR**

*(Gregor pauses)* Yes, Mrs Manager. I think I do.

## Mental Health

**MR FRANCIS**

I wouldn't have wanted to say any of this in front of your father, but your behaviour is such that I don't see why I should waste any more of my time with you. Therefore I no longer see why your father should not hear what I have to say. Your position with the company is not secure. Your performance recently has been unsatisfactory, and as your manager informed you, whilst this is not a season for especially good business, there is no season for no business at all. Mr Samsa, this cannot be allowed to continue.

**GREGOR**

*(At the door now and struggling to unlock and open the door)*

Mr Francis, I'm going to open the door this instant. A slight indisposition, a dizzy spell has prevented me from waking up on time. I apologise, but I'm feeling quite well now. I beg your patience for a moment longer! I have been unwell lately, and I should have reported it at the office but people should have noticed it from the way I looked. Sir! Spare my father these baseless allegations! Perhaps you haven't read the recent orders I sent in? Besides, I'll make the eight o'clock train, a couple of hours rest have strengthened me. I'll be at the office in no time. Please tell them that and pass on my best wishes to our employer.



## Compassion

*(The Cleaner picks up the broom and starts sweeping)*

**GREGOR**

Please, I need help. My injuries are becoming worse, from when I fell on the first day and now from when Father hit me with those apples. I fear my legs are failing now, and my back is in constant pain. Please call for my Father so he can arrange for a doctor to visit.

**CLEANER**

*(Looking over at Gregor briefly)* That's it, you just sit there and make noises. As long as you stay in your place we'll get along fine.

You know, your father explained to me what has happened here. Your father and sister should really move out into a smaller place, they don't need all this space any more.

It's not even out of consideration for you that they are working so hard to try to maintain everything without letting on to anybody what is really going on. You could be transported to another flat in a large packing case, after all. But your father needs to keep up appearances.

Do you know they have sold everything they had which was worth money? And they work constantly, wearing themselves to the very edge of their capacity, just to keep this flat. Your father has had a lodger move into the spare room, you know. That's why somebody needs to keep the stink from your room spreading out. Nobody would want to live here knowing that there is a dung beetle like you living in the other room.





## Kindness

**GREGOR**

I want to tell you a secret, Grete. I've been saving up a little bit of money each month. Only a little, but over time it has added up to a relatively decent sum. *(Grete looks at him, confused)* Next year I hope to have enough to send you to the Royal Academy, and there you will become the finest violinist in the world.

**GRETE**

*(Grete is shocked at this news. She moves to the table and sits down heavily.)*

Really?

**GREGOR**

Yes, really. I've been planning this for a long time, and I'm very nearly there. You are going to the Royal Academy, Grete.

**GRETE**

I don't know what to say. I just don't know what - *(her voice breaks, she can't continue, being so close to tears)* Thank you Gregor! Thank you, thank you, thank you! *(She rushes over to Gregor, but stops before she can throw her arms around him, remembering how sensitive he is to pain.)*

**GREGOR**

I love you, Grete. And I would do anything for you. Anything. You are going to be a world famous violinist, and I will be honoured to be able to help you on that journey.

**GRETE**

Oh, Gregor, I love you too. So much. Any time you want me to play the violin for you, just say. Any time you need cheering up, I'll be there for you.

**GREGOR**

I know you will, Grete. As I will always be there for you. *(Gregor pauses)* But for now, you are right. I should go to bed, try to rest before tomorrow.

**GRETE**

Yes, yes you should. Goodnight, Gregor. I love you.



## Drama

### Live Production and Seeing the Show:

The story is seen from Gregor's perspective, and follows his story throughout the first half. However, during the second half Gregor is replaced as the main character by Grete and Father.

In Act 1, Gregor experiences difficulty and tries to explain how he is feeling in a variety of settings:

- At home, both in his bedroom and in the kitchen where his family sit and talk

- At his manager's office

- During a meeting with a customer

- At the Doctor's office

- On the train

In Act 2, everything happens in the Samsa's flat, except for the very end where Grete and Father are able to go out. However, the flat itself changes as Gregor's impact on the family becomes more apparent, with rubbish and litter collecting in his room.

With your teacher, choose an area to focus on when making notes or doing research. These headings will help you:

### Characterisation:

Focus on one or more of the following: Gregor, Grete, Father, the Cleaner, the Customer, Mr Francis, the Manager, the Doctor, the Lodger. Why do these characters behave in the way they do? Each of them have their own motivations, why do some of them seem more sympathetic than others?

### Design:

The music, the set, the lighting and the costumes create atmosphere, different characters, and different scenes.



Gregor's room is often dark, and the view through the window reflects the mood of the people and events happening. When Grete and Father go outside at the end the lighting is much brighter. Why do you think this is? How does the lighting help the audience to focus on what is happening?

The music and effects help us to understand Gregor's frame of mind, how does the music make you feel as the story progresses?

In some scenes we see a poster or the view from Gregor's window. Some of the posters are confusing and easy to misunderstand. Why do you think this is?

After watching the performance you could use a shared document to put your notes together. This will help you to create a strong overview of key moments in the play and help you to evaluate what you saw.

## Prompt Questions:

When Gregor first talks to Father, Mr Samsa is quite dismissive and refuses to look up from his newspaper. Why do you think he treats Gregor like this even though Gregor is working to make money for the family?

When Gregor goes to see the Customer he is at first quite upbeat and optimistic. What happens to change his mood?

When Grete and Gregor call the medical advice line, do you think the voice is a real person or a computer? Does it make any difference?

The actors in the play portray a variety of roles. How do they make it clear which characters they are playing at different times? How are they different from each other?

How is Gregor different once he turns into the insect? Although he looks different, are there also changes to the way he moves and behaves after the transformation?

Once Gregor physically changes, how does his mind change? And how does it stay the same?



## Drama: Studio Activities

### Acting Activity

In this first section, there are three characters: Gregor, who is feeling quite unwell and is scared of what will happen in the meeting with his boss; the Manager, who wishes to complain about Gregor's work, and Mr Francis, who is there to ensure that everybody is treated fairly and that the Company can continue to function properly.

Consider what each character wants to get out of this situation and why they behave the way they do. Why does the Manager sit on the desk? Why doesn't Mr Francis support Gregor? Why does Gregor behave the way he does during the meeting?

In terms of performance, can the actors play the characters in different ways? How does a facial expression or a way of sitting or standing convey how people are feeling?

#### Act 1 Scene 7: The Manager's Office

The lights come up to reveal a man and a woman sitting behind a desk. The wall displays a motivational poster which says 'Anything is Possible/Nothing is Impossible' in a confusing way.

*(Gregor enters, shuffling uncomfortably. He is wearing the hoodie and also his suit jacket. As the lights are brighter here his pale/slightly green face is more pronounced. He does not have his briefcase.)*

#### **MANAGER**

Mr Samsa, take a seat please.

*(Gregor shuffles to the chair and sits, rocking slightly. The Manager sits on the table and leans forward to look at Gregor.)*

You don't look well at all, Mr Samsa. I'm not aware of you taking any sick leave recently though.

#### **GREGOR**

I've been working hard, Mrs Manager, yes.

*(The Manager looks over at the man still seated at the desk.)*



**MANAGER**

Well that may count in your favour here. I take it you know Mr Francis from HR? Mr Francis is here to ensure that what is said here in this meeting is recorded correctly and accurately. Do you understand, Mr Samsa?

**GREGOR**

Yes, I understand. Hello, Mr Francis.

*(Mr Francis nods)*

**MANAGER**

Now then, Mr Samsa. You are aware, I am sure, that we take our responsibilities as an employer very seriously indeed. One of these responsibilities is to monitor workflow levels amongst the staff members, and to take action whenever it appears that there may be an issue. Do you understand?

**GREGOR**

*(Shifting in his seat)*

Yes, Mrs Manager, I understand.

**MANAGER**

Monitoring of your workflow this past quarter has highlighted some particular trends. Mr Francis, please?

**MR FRANCIS**

Ahem. Mr Samsa, your hours logged are exemplary. You do appear to be engaging with a very large number of existing and potential clients.

*(The Manager looks at Gregor who sits up straighter in his chair.)*

On the other hand, the orders you are bringing in from those existing and potential clients... well, it is a very poor result.

**GREGOR**

Well, this line of work is seasonal, Mrs Manager. You have said so yourself on numerous occasions.

**MANAGER**

Yes, Mr Samsa, there are indeed seasons where we expect to do large volumes of business. There are seasons where we expect reduced business. *(Pauses for effect)* There are no seasons where we expect to do no business at all.

*(Gregor sinks in his seat again.)*





**MR FRANCIS**

There is also the matter of a number of cash receipts which were entrusted to you, Mr Samsa, in this last quarter. Unfortunately it does appear that there are a great deal of irregularities in the procedures followed.

**GREGOR**

What kind of irregularities? I believe that I have processed all of those payments correctly.

**MANAGER**

That, Mr Samsa, is currently the subject of an internal investigation. I would like to point out, Mr Samsa, that this is not a disciplinary meeting, and neither is it our intention, at this meeting, to terminate your employment. This meeting is merely to advise you of our position, and to make you aware of certain matters which are ongoing and may affect your employment with the company.

**GREGOR**

Mrs Manager, are you accusing me of anything in particular?

**MANAGER**

Mr Samsa. Please try to understand the position I am in here. You have always been a solid employee. You have always brought in a steady income for the company. But these things, like so many others, are seasonal. One season may be a time of trust and of good results. Another season may be different. We are currently, I'm afraid to say, in the second category.

**MR FRANCIS**

Mr Samsa, can you tell me what you know about our account with the Fairline Furniture Company?

**GREGOR**

Yes, I visited that customer about a month ago. She said she was unhappy about some delays with her previous order. I requested a pricing review with management, and my request for support with the account was turned down.

**MANAGER**

Well Mr Samsa, that customer has now cancelled their account with us and is using a different supplier. That customer also appears to know our Chairman on a personal level. And Mr Chairman wants me to be able to tell him why we have lost such a sizeable account.



**GREGOR**

Well I think all of the documentation should be in place. I requested a price review, it was turned down, and I communicated this to the customer. It is very unfortunate that the customer has gone elsewhere but I fail to see why you are questioning me about this when you could have simply looked through the account.

**MANAGER**

I'm questioning you, Mr Samsa, because Mr Chairman is... vexed. And if Mr Chairman is vexed, this means I have to find answers. And quickly. The fault cannot lay with the management structure of the company, Mr Samsa. That's not how business works. If the management structure of the company were found to be inefficient or unsuitable then the company would simply cease to exist. If management have made an incorrect decision, one which has damaged the business, then I can only surmise that the information upon which they based the decision must have been faulty. Do you see where I am coming from, Mr Samsa?

**GREGOR**

*(Gregor pauses)* Yes, Mrs Manager. I think I do.

**MANAGER**

Quite frankly, Mr Samsa, given your recent track record, and your, honestly, untidy and slovenly appearance today, I am inclined to believe that your attention to detail in your sales techniques, and therefore in your dealings with the wider organisation, may no longer be fit for purpose.

**MR FRANCIS**

As your Manager has already pointed out, Mr Samsa, this is not a disciplinary or hearing meeting. However, I must inform you that an investigation has begun into the matters which we have touched upon today and therefore you are not permitted to disclose any of the information or views expressed in this meeting to any third party.

**MANAGER**

As part of our investigation, we will be taking into account all aspects of your position within the company. Both your long-standing loyalty to the company and your excellent attendance records will be factors in whatever decisions we make. As will the matter of your recent sales, the outcome of the investigation into the cash receipts, and the loss of the Fairline account. Mr Samsa, the fact that we are holding this meeting at all must display to you the high esteem we hold you in. We could have simply let you go, but as you have been with the company for so long we wanted to give you every opportunity to represent yourself.



**GREGOR**

Yes, I see that. Thank you, Mrs Manager.

**MANAGER**

Unless you have any questions, Mr Samsa, that will be all for today. Mr Francis will arrange a further meeting with you to discuss our findings. In the meantime I'm sure we can rely on your continued hard work and commitment to the company.

*(Gregor stands and nods to the Manager and Mr Francis.)*

**GREGOR**

Thank you Mr Francis, Mrs Manager.

*(Mr Francis shows Gregor to the door and Gregor exits. The Manager returns to her chair and she and Mr Francis look at each other across the room for a moment before the lights fade and the music and insect noises resume.)*

This next scene comes toward the end of the play. Gregor has been living as an insect for some time, and his family have rented out the spare bedroom to a lodger to try to make some money.

As the scene begins, Grete is entertaining the Lodger, and after such a long time of trying to adapt to the new living situation is enjoying a relatively pleasant evening.

Gregor, however, becomes jealous of the Lodger, believing that he is eating all the good food while he himself is starving. For a long time he has eaten only rotten food, and is unhappy about his despite not wanting fresh food.

Gregor hides in the kitchen, keen to listen to Grete playing her violin, and once he is discovered the situation suddenly becomes extremely unpleasant, with the Lodger being both fascinated and disgusted by Gregor, and Grete realising that she cannot stand to even look at the monster which lives in the flat and cannot bring herself to even refer to it as Gregor.

The Lodger and Father are played by the same actor. How can this person change between these characters quickly? How do the emotions of the characters change during this scene and how is this shown?



## Act 2 Scene 5: The kitchen

The Lodger sits at the table with an empty plate in front of him. Grete stands anxiously in the background. Gregor is still in his room.

*(The scene begins with an awkward pause as the Lodger sits ignoring Grete. Eventually Grete steps forward and clears her throat.)*

**GRETE**

Sir, I hope everything was to your satisfaction?

**LODGER**

*(Looking up at Grete and smiling)* Yes, thank you Grete. It was delicious. Do you perhaps have any wine? I would very much like a little drink to help that lovely food go down.

**GRETE**

*(Visibly relieved)* Oh, thank you sir. I'm so pleased that you are happy. May I clear your plate? And I'll check to see if we have any wine. I am sure Father would be happy to pick up a bottle on his way home if not?

**LODGER**

Yes please, thank you. I've finished with the plate. And it's fine if you don't have any wine at the moment, I would be happy to wait.

*(Greta picks up the plate and exits with it.)*

**LODGER**

*(Calling to Grete off stage)* Oh, Grete? Your father tells me that you are an excellent violinist?

**GRETE**

*(Entering the kitchen)* The violin? Oh, I hardly have time to play any more I'm afraid, I haven't picked it up in months. I wouldn't say excellent, anyway, I think my Father is being too kind.

**LODGER**

Nonsense! I'm sure you play beautifully! Say, why don't you fetch your violin and play a little for me?

*(Grete is unsure, embarrassed)*

In the absence of any wine I'm sure a little music would help my food to digest.



**GRETE**

*(After a pause)* Well, okay. Excuse me for a moment, I'll be back shortly with my violin.

*(The Lodger smiles after Grete as she exits)*

*(Focus shifts to Gregor, watching all this from his doorway.)*

**GREGOR**

Look at him, treating Grete like a servant. And the way he eats, it's disgusting. Throwing the food down his throat, he may as well just stick his face in the plate and do without cutlery at all. Look how he gorges himself whilst I am dying.

Is this what the family has come to now that I'm no longer able to work? Being servile to unwelcome guests in our own home? This man, in only a few hours, has taken over every room, especially the kitchen.

*(Grete returns with her violin and stands DSC, preparing to play. Gregor slumps at the sight of the violin, then stands up straight as he realises she intends to play.)*

**GREGOR**

Oh, how long has it been since I heard Grete play? I remember feeling that the sound of her violin was the only thing which would give me any pleasure in my tiring, grubby day.

*(Grete begins to play the same tune as in Act 1. Gregor slowly moves toward her. The Lodger rises from his seat and stands behind Grete, both of them with their backs to Gregor.)*

*(During the music Gregor creeps forward, but stops before reaching Grete and the Lodger. He looks around and hides under the table.*

*Grete stops playing and looks at the Lodger, embarrassed but hopeful.)*

**LODGER**

Grete, that was wonderful! You really are very talented indeed, your father was absolutely correct.

**GRETE**

Well, thank you sir. *(Grete is quite emotional after playing the same tune which she played for Gregor in the past.)* I used to love to play that tune for... It's been a while, I think I'm a little rusty.





**LODGER**

*(Turning to return to his chair at the table)* Nonsense! You play beautifully. I'd love to listen to you practice another time, if that's - WHAT THE HELL IS THAT!? *(He has seen Gregor hiding under the table)*

**GRETE**

*(Grete sees what has happened and tries to stand between the Lodger and Gregor, shielding him from view)* Ah, sir, I'm afraid this is something my father perhaps should have told you about.

**LODGER**

*(Amused)* Told me about? I should think so! *(He peers down to look at Gregor under the table)* What on earth is it? It's fascinating, I've never seen its like.

**GRETE**

It doesn't normally come out of its room, you see. This is the first time in months.

**LODGER**

You mean this thing lives here? In this flat? What is the meaning of this?

**GRETE**

It's an extremely unfortunate story. Sir, if you'll just allow me to send it back to its room I will explain everything.

**LODGER**

My dear girl, I do hope you don't expect me to lodge here if this... I don't even know what to call it. This, thing, is going to be residing in the next room. This is my first evening here, and I find this monster hiding under the table where I have just eaten? Despite this you tell me that this beast 'doesn't normally come out of its room?'

**GRETE**

Sir, I know how this looks, and I'm sorry -

**LODGER**

No. I feel quite ill at the thought that I've just eaten a meal in a place where this vermin may be running around on the tabletop. I hereby announce that in view of the disgusting conditions prevalent in this flat and in this family I am giving up my room immediately. I will of course not be paying you a penny, and I will reserve the right to decide whether or not to claim my expenses for finding lodging for tonight. I'll be considering also whether or not I should sue you. Believe me, the proof will not be hard to come by.



*(The Lodger moves away from the table toward the exit.)*

Good evening to you Miss Samsa. I'll collect my belongings from my room immediately and I'll be on my way.

*(The Lodger leaves hurriedly)*

**GRETE**

*(Grete walks away from the table still holding the violin. She refuses to look at Gregor, still under the table.)*

Just get out of here before Father returns! If you can understand me, just get out!

**GREGOR**

Grete, I just wanted to hear you play. Perhaps for the final time. I am weak, I am injured, and I am hardly eating. I fear I may not have long left, and then you'll be free of me. I cannot apologise for disturbing the Lodger in such a way. Hearing you play has been the only thing in months which has brought even a withered flower of joy to my heart.

**GRETE**

*(Finally turning to Gregor)* Do you really not understand me, you monster? Are you so far gone? Just get out of here!

*(Father returns from work, he looks worried)*

**FATHER**

Grete? I just saw the lodger hurrying down the street with his bags. What has happened?

*(Grete runs to hug her father, and points at Gregor beneath the table)*

**GRETE**

It broke free again.

**FATHER**

Oh no.

**GRETE**

Father, even if you don't realise it, I do. We cannot go on like this. In front of this monstrous creature I cannot even bring myself to pronounce my brother's name, and therefore I merely say this: we must try to get rid of it. We have tried all that we can do to try to care for it and look after it. Nobody could reproach us in the slightest.



**FATHER**

Yes. Yes, you are right. A thousand times you are right.

**GRETE**

We must try to get rid of it. Eventually it will kill us, both of us. I can see it coming. When people have to work as hard as we do, they can't tolerate this perpetual torment at home too. I can't take it any more!

*(Grete is overcome and bursts into tears.)*

**FATHER**

But what can we do?

*(Grete just shrugs her shoulders, defeated.)*

**FATHER**

If he only understood us...

*(He walks to the table to look at Gregor)*

If he only understood us then perhaps we could reach an agreement with him. But as it is...

**GRETE**

It's got to go. Father, you have to try to shake off the idea that that... that thing is Gregor. It is not. Our real misfortune stems from having believed it for so long.

How can it be Gregor? If it were Gregor he would have long ago realised that it is impossible for people to live alongside a creature like that. Then he would have gone away of his own free will. Then we would have had no more brother. No more son. But we could go on living and honour his memory.

But as it is this monster persecutes us. Drives away our lodger. Wants to take over the whole flat so that we have to sleep in the street.

*(Gregor tries to turn around in order to crawl back to his room)*

**GRETE**

Just Look! *(Grete runs to hide behind her Father, putting him between herself and Gregor)* It's starting up again!

**GREGOR**

*(Gregor looks back at his Father and Grete)* I wasn't trying to scare you or start up. I only want to go back to my room. I just want to go. Please, please just let me disappear.



*(Gregor crawls slowly back to his room, watched by Father and Grete. Once he slumps onto his bed Grete runs to the doorway holding a kitchen chair, pressing it against the door.)*

**GRETE**

At last.

*(The lights dim, leaving only a light on Gregor laid on his bed. The rest of the stage is dark and Grete and Father exit. The sad music and insect noises play again, gradually slowing into a heartbeat which eventually slows further and then stops as the lights go out.)*



## English

### Essay – written task

On the subject of Transformation, nobody in the story questions why or how Gregor changes into an insect. Why do you think this is? What does it say about what happens to Gregor and the people around him?

Gregor is not the only character who changes during the story, Grete and his Father also change a lot. How does Gregor change, and what similarities and differences are there between Gregor and the other characters who transform during the story?

### Research and debate

What is your understanding of the word Kafkaesque?

Can you think of any situations in life which could be described as Kafkaesque? Why are some systems and events particularly confusing and difficult to understand? How could these things be made more accessible?

### Creative writing task

Imagine that you are going to make a film of the story of the Metamorphosis. Which parts of the story would you want to focus on? Are there any themes or characters you would remove or change?

Write a pitch for your version of the story, explaining what happens, and why, and why the person listening to your pitch should give you money to make it into a film. Who will come to see it? Why? Who would you cast in the various roles?

