

The Metamorphosis Literary Device

Writer: Franz Kafka | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Figures of Speech

- **Irony:** Irony occurs when the expected outcome and the actual situation are completely opposite. In the case of Gregor Samsa, the irony lies in the fact that he sacrificed his own dreams for years and worked tirelessly for his family. He labored day and night to support everyone. But when he became helpless, it was his family who rejected him. Even in his death, they did not mourn, but rather felt relieved. **Effect:** This irony exposes the selfishness of family and society. It shows that people are valued only as long as they are useful.
- **Metaphor:** Kafka directly uses Gregor's transformation into an insect as a metaphor. Gregor had already become insect-like mentally, even before his physical change. The boring slavery of his job, the lack of personal life, and the excessive burden of family responsibilities gradually dehumanized him. **Effect:** This metaphor highlights the slavery of labor, the loss of modern human identity, and the depth of existential crisis.
- **Symbolism:**
 - **The Transformation:** Gregor's change into an insect is not just a physical alteration. It is a symbol of modern man's enslavement, work pressure, and loss of identity. In the eyes of family and society, he is no longer a man, but merely a machine for labor. When he can no longer work, he is discarded.
 - **The Door:** The door of Gregor's room is always shut. It symbolizes his imprisonment, isolation, and separation from family and society. On the other side of the door lies the noise of life, while inside is Gregor's solitude.
 - **The Apple:** The apple thrown by Mr. Samsa that embeds in Gregor's body symbolizes the family's aggression, hatred, and irreversible rejection. The wound never heals, accelerating Gregor's suffering and death.
 - **Furniture and Picture:** The furniture in Gregor's room and the picture of the fur-clad woman on the wall represent his past human life. When the family removes the furniture, it shows they no longer acknowledge Gregor as human. Hugging the picture was Gregor's final attempt to hold on to his human identity.

- **The Violin:** Grete's violin music symbolizes hope and comfort for Gregor. He believes music will connect him to life again. But in the family's eyes, it becomes proof of his alienation, since the lodgers flee the house in fear after seeing him.
- **The Charwoman:** The old charwoman's character is also symbolic. She does not see Gregor as a man but as a mere creature, and yet she does not fear him. She represents that side of society that adapts to strange or terrifying things but shows no compassion.

Moral Lessons from The Metamorphosis

- Family should not abandon their own.
- Isolation kills the soul.
- Work without joy is slavery.