

The Metamorphosis Theme

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Themes

Alienation and Loneliness: The most important theme in the novella is alienation. After Gregor Samsa transforms into an insect, he becomes separated not only from his family but also from society. Once, he had been the family's main breadwinner, someone everyone relied upon. After his transformation, he is hidden away, locked in his room. No one talks to him anymore. Even his beloved sister Grete eventually comes to see him as a burden. Gregor's act of sitting by the window, staring at the outside world, becomes a powerful symbol of his deep loneliness.

Family Responsibility and Sacrifice: Gregor sacrifices his own dreams and desires to pay off his family's debts. He works tirelessly, traveling every day to earn money. But when he becomes incapable, his family forgets his sacrifice and begins to neglect him. Mr. Samsa returns to work, Mrs. Samsa starts sewing, and Grete takes a job. They rebuild their lives, but they feel no gratitude toward Gregor. This theme highlights how love within families often depends on usefulness: when someone is no longer needed, neglect replaces affection.

Decay of Humanity and Inhumanity: Gregor's transformation is not just a physical change but a symbol of losing human dignity in the eyes of others. His family gradually stops seeing him as a human being, treating him instead as a repulsive insect. The father's act of throwing apples, the mother's fainting, and Grete's harsh declaration all exemplify this inhuman treatment. At Gregor's death, the family does not grieve but instead feels relieved. Kafka illustrates how, in modern society, when someone becomes incapable, compassion disappears and cruelty takes its place.

Crisis of Identity: At first, Gregor still believes himself to be a responsible man and provider for his family. He even tries to convince the Chief Clerk that he can return to work. But his physical transformation and his family's reaction gradually make him realize his identity has changed. He is no longer a brother, son, or employee; he is merely a creature. His room becomes a storeroom, and food is thrown to him like garbage. Gregor's struggle symbolizes the agony of losing one's identity in a dehumanizing world.