# “The Metamorphosis”

1.    List three symbols from the story. What makes you think they are symbols? What do you think they mean?

A)

The first symbol that I found was the picture of the woman in furs. This being mentioned at the start of the story, seems to be a symbol as Gregor has this picture on a wall as he was still human. This item seems to come across as an item from Gregor's prior life that he wants to hold on to as a reminder that a human lived there.

The second symbol would be the fathers uniform. This becomes a symbol as Gregor seems to have more respect for his father as he thinks of him in that uniform. The uniform gives off an air of dignity. In return , this memory of his fathers uniform gives Gregor a small sense of respect for his father.

The third symbol would be Food. The food represents how the Samsa family feels towards Gregor. One member that sticks out is Grete who Gregor seems to be the closest with. This seems present as she leaves out milk and bread out for Gregor as a symbol of sympathy as she remembers as they were Gregor's favorite food when he was human.

B)

I would say that the picture of the woman in furs is a pretty big symbol in the story even though it is a short part of the story. It symbolizes his humanity and he doesn’t want to lose the last bit of humanity he may have left. Another symbol would be the food, it brings out his change. Things he used to enjoy like milk are now something he doesn’t like at all; he prefers moldy scraps of food. This shows great difference from a person to a bug. It is also a time of symbolism towards his family showing sympathy towards him in the beginning of the story but towards the end of the story food represents what he misses when he sees the boarders eating the food his mother and sister made; this moment also causes resentment from Gregor because at this point he feels neglected and starved. Lastly a symbol could be the violin his sister plays. This brings upon guilt to Gregor because he wanted to send her to music school, but it also makes him feel close to her and his humanity when he listens to her play. A lot of these symbols bring Gregor great sadness and eventually death.

C)

Food is one of the themes in this story. In the beginning of the story, Gregor's family (mainly his sister), provide him with bread and milk so he doesn't starve. As the story continues, his sister gives him old scraps of food that only get worse and worse until the story nears its end and his family is providing him with no food at all. Additionally, the apple that injures Gregor after it is thrown at him by his father is what weakens Gregor and eventually is what leads to his untimely death.

Another theme is the picture of the woman in furs. This photo is the only constant Gregor has throughout the story, and he eventually finds comfort in it, clinging to it as his mother and sister put all the furniture in his room.

2.    What is the mood of Gregor's family at the end of the story? Why? How does their mood at the end compare to the way they feel at the beginning?

A)

Gregor's family seems to be relieved that he had died. They left the apartment and went for a stroll and took the trolley to the outskirts of town. they were all happy and thinking of how the future looked promising and something they could look forward to. I think now that Gregor had died, they feel as if a burden had been lifted off their shoulders. Now they don't have to try and hide the fact that they have a big bug living in the apartment who used to be their son, trying to feed it and hide it from anyone. In the beginning they seemed to be a morose group of people. Gregors family seemed like they had nothing going for them except the fact that Gregor was working for this firm and was looking at it as a place he could really stick with and become someone. In the end they seemed to be so optimistic about the future and what the possibilities there were for them.

B)

In the beginning of the story, Gregor’s family was seemingly very dependent upon Gregor for everything. He was clearly the head of the family. He made all the money and even chose the apartment in which they lived. His father was a shell of his former self and his sister was just a wistful little thing. After Gregor died, they were able to focus on a future and see their present situation as having some merit. In fact, if Gregor had not been transformed, they might never have found themselves so happily suited, with jobs that had a future and senses of self-possession. His existence had shackled them.

C)

At the end of the story, Gregor's family is relieved by his death after resenting him and his new appearance. In the very end of the story, they seem to forget Gregor entirely and it appears their lives are changed for the better following his death.

At the beginning of the story, when Gregor's appearance has first changed, his family wants to help him and provides care for him. His sister, Grete, especially cares for him. Over the course of the story, the family begins treating Gregor like he is a burden and not one of them anymore, leading to their treatment and feelings towards him in the end.

3.    Which characters grow in this story? How? Why?

A)

The two characters I felt grew the most are Gregor and Grete. The obvious change for Gregor is his acclimation to his new life as an insect. Before going through his metamorphosis, Gregor very seldom does things for himself. As an insect, Gregor is relieved of carrying his family’s debt and begins taking part in simple pleasures. For example, walking on the walls or sitting in the chair and looking out his window. Though he still does many things to keep his family comfortable, he learns to give himself happiness.

Grete, on the other hand, starts off as Gregor’s loving sister. As Gregor’s transformation does not allow him to care for his family, Grete is forced to be self-reliant while also taking on the role of Gregor’s caretaker. Overall, Grete transitions from being child to a mature and capable woman.

B)

I think almost all of the characters grow in this story. Gregor, to me, seems to grow the least, but his priorities and appreciation for life evolve into something different when he turns into an insect and everything he had once found to be important (working, caring for his family, etc...) now seemed silly. Gregor's family experienced the most growth in this story in my opinion, his mother especially. At the beginning, Gregor's mother couldn't even stand to look at him; she was disgusted and scared. Although, after she realized the situation they were in, she managed to change her views about her bug-son and even her views about working women.

C)

The character that grow the most in the story are the father and most of all the sister Grete. The father goes from being taken of by his son and staying home, to working to try and support his family. Since this starts to take a toll on him he ends up being hostel and injuring him. Grete is the biggest growth we see in the story as she goes from a girl to a women. She ultimately is really the only one to care for Gregor by bringing him food and giving him room to roam. She also becomes resentful of Gregor and starts to not care about taking care of him. In the end of the story it is pointed out by her parents that even though she has grown pale she has grown up and ready for a husband.

4.    As a man, how did Gregor define pleasure? How did he define it as a creature?

A)

As a man Gregor defined pleasure as having work that provided for one’s family.  Sometimes that work was not very pleasant, but being able to provide for the family brought it’s own pleasure and the music his sister played on the violin was pleasurable to him.  As a bug he defined pleasure as the ability to walk freely in the room, on the walls and ceiling.  He still enjoyed the music his sister played, so much so that he was drawn out of the room when she played, to the shock of the others.  He even stated that hearing her play was a satisfaction to him more than even food could bring or the climbing of the walls could bring.

B)

Throughout the story his character doesn't seem to change too much. As a man and as a bug he seemed to accept hardship and push through the blows. He worked hard and doesn't complain. No matter which situation he faces whether it be his job or being a bug, he tries to make the best out of it and enjoying any way he can. You do see him as a bug enjoying the room more and wondering around making the best of his life. His pleasure is defined daily of just doing what he can to enjoy his day and not hurt his family.

C)

As a man, Gregor enjoyed working with wood and looking at the picture in his room.  He also gained pleasure from the idea of quitting his job and, essentially, telling his boss where to stick it.  I think Gregor also enjoyed helping his family.  If he didn’t openly think this, I believe his personal beliefs and moral compass guided him to get pleasure from helping the family.  He doesn’t complain about helping the family, he just doesn’t like his job.  As a bug, Gregor enjoys crawling over the walls and especially likes hanging from the ceiling.  He likes the way it makes him feel and causes a new sensation.

5.    What is "comic" in this story? Why does it strike you as funny or absurd?

A)

I found it funny that Gregor, of all the things in his room, wanted to keep a picture on the wall.  He even climbed up on the wall and covered it so that his sister and mother would not take it.  Then his mother fainted at the sight of him, laying out on the couch he used to hide himself.  They wanted him to change back and yet they were taking all the things away that reminded him that he was human.  He was trying to protect his humanity and they were trying to strip him of it.  I found that funny because they treated him as if he was never human in the first place.  He was trying hard to hang on to the part of him that was human and they were trying to forget that he was human.

B)

The comedic factor of The Metamorphosis comes from people’s acceptance of Gregor turning into an insect. The absurdity, of course, comes from the impossibility of the scenario. We, the reader’s, know it is an impossible situation, nevertheless the characters accept it. This is further compounded by their lack of looking over other possibilities. For example, the possibility of Gregor having been devoured by this insect. Despite this possibility, Gregor’s family willingly accepts that he has gone through a metamorphosis. As such, they allow him to continue living in the home and attempt to tend to him. The narrative would have been extremely different if the family simply ceased to accommodate Gregor and set him loose.

C)

The “comic” in this sense is that Gregor treats his transformation into a giant bug so nonchalantly as his only concern when he woke up was that he was going to lose his job and the is followed by the concern of how he was going to pay his parents debts. The only one not freaked about the transformation is Gregor himself. There’s also the fact that there aren’t many questions poking at the absurdity of him changing into a giant bug or how easily the family accepts that Gregor turned into a bug. For sure the family is shocked at first, but they easily accept the assumption that the giant bug is/was Gregor at some point in time. The funny nature of the situation comes from the absurd being treated as mundane or is just accepted as a part of everyday life with little to no resistance.

6.    Why does Gregor turn into a bug? Why not a pony or a kitten?

A)

The reason I think Gregor turns into a bug is because he is easier to let go this way. If he would of turned into a pony or kitten, he would of been loveable. The family would of never wanted to let go of him and would probably always want to keep him around and care for him. This would hinder the ability for them to grow as characters in the end because they would still have to care for Gregor. Being a bug also helps the family let go of Gregor when he dies in a much easier way. They had grown apart from Gregor because he was hard to look at and smelled really bad. If he would of been a cute animal and if he would of died, it would of been really hard for the family since they would of still been really attached to Gregor.

B)

If Gregor had turned into a pony or a kitten, then the story would have been less impactful as far as the loss his family suffered when he died. The drama of the apple sticking into his back, and slowly rotting hid bug body added to the story as well as the fact that it was his own father that threw such a detrimental object. For the reader, if Gregor had turned in to a kitten or pony then the death of the character would have been more devastating. For him to transform to a bug instead, allows us to focus on the emotions, actions, and reactions of the other characters and feel empathy for them. Had it been the other way around and he was a more attractive creature, then the reader could have felt anger and judgment towards his family members. In this case I feel that a bug transformation allowed us to have the attachment that the author desired.

C)

Gregor turns into a bug, rather than a pony or kitten because a bug is more shocking and less acceptable in a home. If he was a cuddly and cute animal then his family and others around the house would not have been so appalled by his presence. It was needed for everyone to move on and not like him for the story to move like it did. A bug is also a symbol of the whole family, including him taking on their own roles in the family and him not being the big supporter. Being a bug allowed for there to be a buildup of resentment that couldn’t of happened with an animal.