

*This guide was prepared using the Bantam Classic edition, © 1972. Other editions may differ.*

#### SYNOPSIS

**Section I:** After a night of forbidding dreams, Gregor Samsa, former army lieutenant turned traveling fabric salesman five years previously, awakens one rainy fall morning at his family flat on Charlotte Street and finds himself transformed into a giant insect with thin legs and segmented body. Knowing that his employer will question his absence if he misses the 5:00 train, Gregor attempts to move toward the door. Clumsily he maneuvers out of bed because he feels obligated to keep his job in order to support his seventeen-year-old sister Grete and their parents, who owe money to his employer.

At 6:30, Gregor realizes that the clock has failed to awaken him, even though it is correctly set for 4:00. He must hurry to make the 7:00 train. At 6:45, his mother taps on his door; Gregor can only chirp in reply. After 7:00, he tries to get out of bed. At 7:10, the manager arrives. After suggesting that Gregor might be concealing embezzlement, he makes veiled threats of firing Gregor for his unpredictable behavior. Gregor struggles to arise.

The household stirs to life in response to Gregor's strange behavior behind the locked door. Grete sends her mother for a doctor. Mr. Samsa sends the maid for a locksmith. Gregor, meanwhile inching himself toward the key and door handle, opens it with his jaws and stands revealed in front of the manager and the Samsa family. The manager backs away; Mrs. Samsa sinks to the floor. Mr. Samsa strikes at Gregor with the manager's cane and a newspaper. Scraped and raw after his father shoves him back into his room, Gregor withdraws into his room. The door slams shut.

**Section II:** Gregor lies in a deep sleep until dusk. His side is scarred and one leg seriously injured. He is attracted to the smell of food and finds a bowl of milk with slices of white bread in it. Rejecting fresh food, he focuses on the door that opens on the living room. Other doors open to admit prying eyes. Later that evening, he discovers the key replaced on the outside.

During the night, Gregor ponders how to accommodate his metamorphosis. He sleeps under the edge of the couch. Later, his sister timorously exchanges his food for kitchen refuse wrapped in newspaper. Gregor whirs in delight and devours it. A pattern develops: Each day he eats in the morning and afternoon. Grete cleans his room. The apartment is never deserted so that there are always family members to care for him. After the maid departs, Mrs. Samsa and Grete take over the household chores.

Because Mr. Samsa's business collapsed five years earlier, Gregor has shouldered complete financial responsibility for the family and has risen from company stock clerk to salesman. Secretly he plans to send Grete to the Conservatory to study music and intends to announce the offer on

Christmas Eve. Mr. Samsa has a small bit of capital put by. Gregor's meager savings will support the Samsas for two years at the most.

A month passes. Grete is still repulsed by her brother's transformation. Mrs. Samsa feels a strong urge to visit her unfortunate son, who delights in scaling the walls and walking the ceiling. No one speaks to Gregor. To give him room to crawl, Grete removes his furniture. He panics at the loss of beloved objects. In a desperate fling, he crawls up the wall to the framed picture of a woman and clings to it.

Mrs. Samsa collapses on the sofa because she is alarmed by Gregor's insect-like behavior. Grete yells at him and hurries to get a restorative to revive her mother. A bottle shatters and wounds him in the face. The door slams shut, cutting him off from his mother. Mr. Samsa returns home in the uniform of a bank messenger and rallies to the support of his wife. He pelts Gregor with apples, one of which becomes embedded in Gregor's back. Gregor's mother runs from Gregor's room between father and son to plead for Gregor's life.

**Section III:** For a month, Gregor suffers from his wound, yet the violent scene clears the air. Gregor again feels like part of the family. His mother works at home sewing lingerie. Grete clerks during the day and studies shorthand and French in the evenings. Mr. Samsa wears his uniform at home and must be helped to bed each evening at ten. The family, unable to live a normal life, loses hope and withdraws from society. Gregor ponders his past and controls the mounting rage that comes from helplessness.

Gregor's room fills with dust and grime. Grete and her mother quarrel over the responsibility for cleaning it. They hire a fierce old widow, who calls Gregor an "old dung beetle" and menaces him with a chair. As spring approaches, his appetite decreases. Three male boarders move in to flesh out the family's meager income. The men dine at the table; the Samsas eat in the kitchen. Gregor resents the boarders and fears that he is dying.

At night, Grete plays the violin while the boarders smoke and read the papers. The family ignores Gregor, who determines to crawl to his sister and demonstrate his appreciation for her music. The boarders point with consternation to the insect as Mr. Samsa directs them to their room. Grete flees weeping. The boarders depart. Grete, at her wit's end, suggests that the family get rid of Gregor. He barely has the strength to crawl into his room, which his family bolts and locks.

Gregor suffers pain from the inflamed wound on his back, and at three in the next morning near the end of March, breathes his last. The cleaning woman pronounces him "dead as a doornail"; Mr. and Mrs. Samsa flee their bed to examine the remains. The boarders stare while the family pays their respects. After a boarder demands breakfast, Mr. Samsa orders them out and watches from the landing as they depart.

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While the family enjoys a day off from work, the cleaning woman announces that she has disposed of the corpse. Mr. Samsa intends to fire her. The family, relieved of their burden, take their first walk in months. On a trolley ride into the country, they make plans to locate a cheaper apartment and to find a husband for Grete, who has blossomed into an attractive woman.

### TIME LINE

- 1883**  
**July 3** Franz Kafka is born in Prague.
- 1889** Mark Twain publishes *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.
- 1895** Freud publishes a study of hysteria.
- 1900** Max Planck formulates quantum theory.  
Freud publishes *The Interpretation of Dreams*.
- 1904-05** Russo-Japanese War: Japanese drive Russians out of Korea and destroys two Russian fleets.
- 1905** Albert Einstein announces his special theory of relativity.
- 1906** Kafka enters a short story contest sponsored by *Zeit* and graduates from university.
- 1907-23** Kafka works for the Workman's Accident Insurance Institute.
- 1911** China becomes a republic.
- 1914**  
**August** World War I begins.
- 1915** "The Metamorphosis" is written: Kafka wins the Fontane prize for "The Boilerman."
- 1916** James Joyce publishes *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.
- 1917**  
**February** Russian Czar Nicholas II abdicates.  
**April** The United States enters World War I.  
**October** Communists seize power in Russia.
- 1918**  
**October** The Austro-Hungarian Empire collapses; Prague becomes the capital of Czechoslovakia.  
**Nov. 11** World War I ends.
- 1918-20** Worldwide influenza epidemic leaves nearly 22 million people dead.
- 1919** The League of Nations is established.  
Adolf Hitler joins the Nazi Party.
- 1922** Mussolini becomes leader of Italy.  
Hermann Hesse publishes *Siddhartha*.
- 1923** Kafka lives briefly in Berlin with Dora Dymant.  
Freud published *The Ego and the Id*.
- 1924**  
**June 3** Kafka dies.
- 1925-27** Max Brod publishes Kafka's three novels.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

A spokesperson for the early modern era, Franz Kafka died on June 3, 1924, before his three longer works elevated him to world fame. Literary furor over his unique style turned his name into the adjective "Kafkaesque," a descriptive of the surreal events and antiheroes who color his pages. A member of Prague's Jewish minority born July 3, 1883, he was the son of Hermann Kafka, a wealthy food wholesaler, and his partner, Julie Lowy Kafka. After the deaths of his two older brothers, Kafka lived in a self-imposed isolation from three younger sisters and suffered his father's cruel punishments for introversion.

Kafka's education began at home with a French tutor. He attained the high standards of the Alstadter Staatsgymnasium and flourished in literature, notably the works of Thomas Mann and Gustave Flaubert. At the insistence of his father, Kafka turned to law. Well trained at the Karls-Ferdinand University of Prague, he graduated in 1906 and served an internship. After working for an Italian insurance agency, from 1907 until his retirement in 1923, he held a menial bureaucratic post as technical writer and inspector at the Workman's Accident Insurance Institute for the Kingdom of Bohemia. While living with his parents, he studied Czech and developed realistic myths, a form he pioneered. At least four times, he abandoned plans to marry. A holiday romance and a more intense alliance with Milena Jesenska Pollak conflicted him further. As his health declined, he fled emotional entanglement and poured himself into writing, his one true mistress.

Emotionally insecure, Kafka battled fatigue, chronic headaches, insomnia, and tuberculosis, which made him ineligible for the draft and eventually killed him. For a short time, he traveled to Italy and France and lived briefly in Berlin with Dora Dymant. Many of his last years were spent in seclusion, either at country retreats, the home of his favorite sister Ottilia in Zurau, or sanitariums. He transferred to the Kierling Sanatorium outside Vienna only weeks before his death. He is buried in the traditional Jewish cemetery at Prag-Straschnitz outside Vienna.

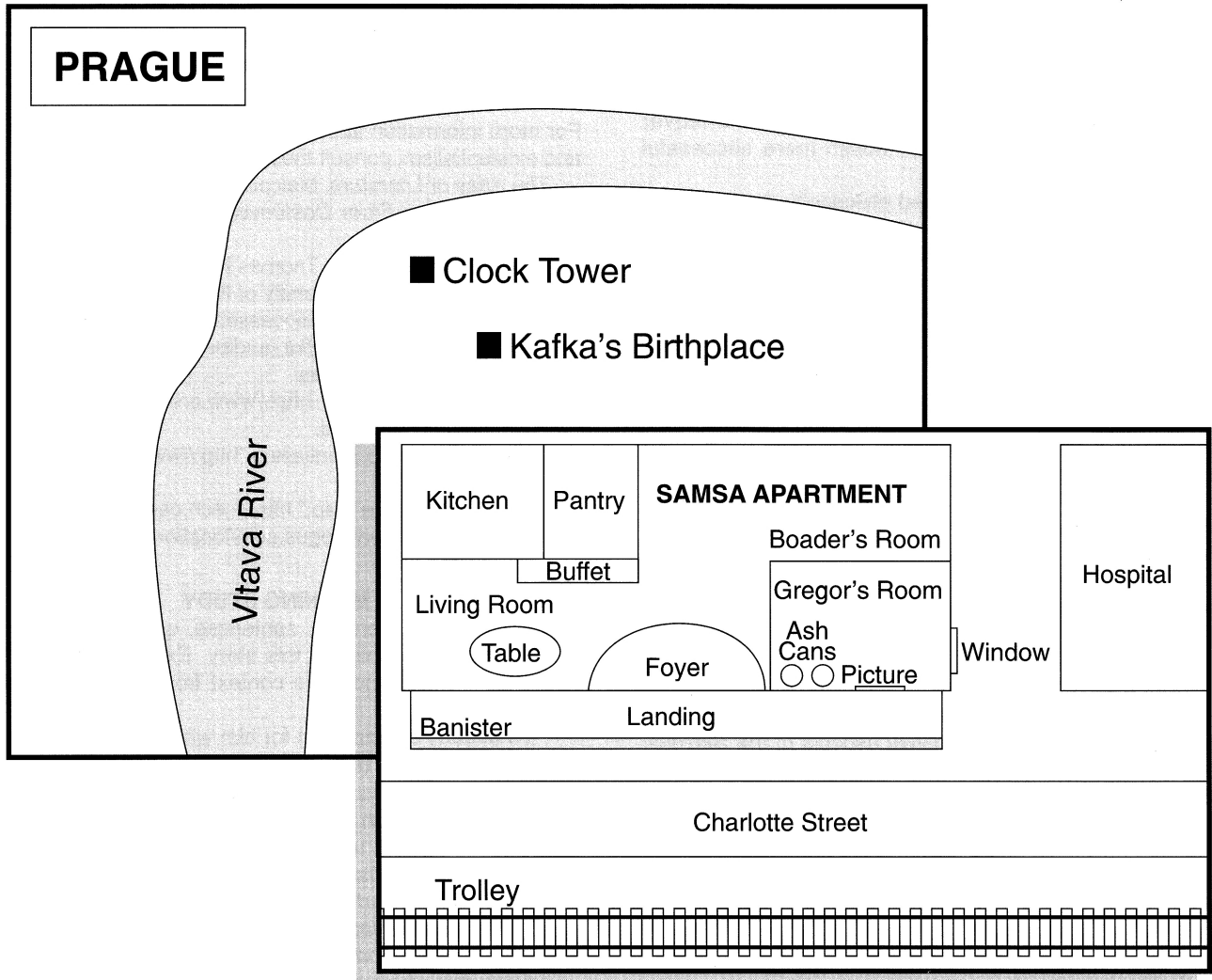
### CRITIC'S CORNER

An acutely self-critical writer and diarist, Kafka destroyed as much as he wrote and left orders for his unpublished manuscripts to be burned. He issued five small volumes in his lifetime. His mentor Max Brod declined to destroy works, which critics rank with those of Marcel Proust and Friedrich Nietzsche. Kafka's canon consists primarily of allegorical short stories published in his lifetime and three posthumous novels—*The Trial* (1925), *The Castle* (1926), and *America* (1927). Each focuses on the exile or outsider who struggles to make sense of institutions, bureaucracy, and courts of law.

Profoundly religious, Kafka steeped himself in Torah and Talmud and Dostoevski's novels as well as the theories of Pascal, Freud, Einstein, Planck, Barth, and Kierkegaard. Kafka's prose dwells on existential themes— isolation, guilt, and fatalism. He once demanded books that grieved him "like the death of someone we loved more than ourselves"; to him, reading meant a spiritual banishment that removed him far from others, "like a suicide." He declared that "A book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us" and wrote with the precipitancy of a man racing to escape doom. His blend of terrifying fantasy and absolutism forms a barrier that denies protagonists satisfying relationships and renders them incapable of coping with a hostile, encroaching milieu. Critics read these elements as both autobiographical and symbolic, often constructing ornate religious and psychological interpretations to account for the Kafka canon.

Kafka's works earned few honors during his lifetime. In 1915 he won the Fontane prize for "The Boilerman." His understanding of bureaucratic and political red tape as well as more serious forms of tyranny brought him a mass following in Europe during an era of rising dictatorship. In contrast to stream-of-consciousness writers, he translated the inner world of dream and nightmare into a real landscape. Demanding response from complacent anti-heroes, these events reveal the horror of inaction against insurmountable

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odds, as depicted by Gregor, who awakens to find himself transformed into a giant insect. The blend of poignance and absurdity influenced later writers, particularly existentialists Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, novelist Conrad Aiken, translator Rex Warner, poet W. H. Auden, and theatrical absurdists Samuel Beckett and Christopher Isherwood.

**GENERAL OBJECTIVES**

1. To define existentialism and apply the term to Kafka's work
2. To explain Kafka's views on tyranny
3. To analyze Kafka's concept of home and family
4. To note Kafka's use of religious and sexual imagery
5. To comprehend the use of the bizarre to reflect on human behavior
6. To comment on alienation as a deterrent to family happiness
7. To account for the literary use of restricted environment
8. To relate estrangement to the author's life
9. To analyze the purpose and meaning of suffering
10. To contrast strictures on male and female characters

**SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

1. To explain Gregor's obligation to the family

2. To note the role of domestics in the Samsa household
3. To comment on Gregor's hopes for Grete
4. To contrast the beauty of Grete's music with the grotesqueness of Gregor's body.
5. To explain the symbolism of the apple, picture, and cane
6. To enumerate adjustments Gregor makes to his physique
7. To note vague references to the passage of time
8. To express the role of the boarders in Kafka's delineation of insensitivity and brutality
9. To account for Gregor's diminished strength and altered mobility
10. To enumerate details intended to shock or repulse the reader

**LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS**

For a better understanding of Franz Kafka's style, present the following terms and applications to his story:

**absurdism** the comic attempt to cope with nothingness, anxiety, or the malaise that afflicts humanity after the collapse of tradition and values. In absurdism, there are no givens, no justice. Doubts about God, patriotism, sanity, and self supplant traditional philosophies that assured humankind

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of purpose, worth, direction, and reward. In Kafka's works, absurdism is a formalized point of view in that the author forces the reader to grapple with a no-win situation and to experience the main character's despair. As demonstrated by Gregor's imprisonment in an insect's unwieldy body, absurdism leaves the victim little room in which to maneuver against old expectations or to establish more successful behaviors and attitudes.

**existentialism** a loosely defined philosophy that contrasts the random nature of the universe with the inadequacy of human control or intelligence. The existentialist hero accepts insignificance and creates meaning by rising to the challenge of events and situations. Although Kafka's Gregor dies and is ignobly swept away by the cleaning woman, his sincerity and devotion to family ennoble his efforts to cope with limitations and to remain a viable, dignified, contributing member of the Samsa family.

**grotesque** a shocking or ridiculous motif or situation characterized by fantasy, caricature, absurdity, or ugliness. Kafka's use of a bizarre and unforeseen metamorphosis forces the reader to examine the story of Gregor Samsa in terms of who he was, what he has become, what his family expects of him, and how they respond to his metamorphosis and demise. The grotesque insect shape represents the ugliness of the Samsa family toward Gregor and their insensitivity to his needs.

**parable** a verbal lesson or illustration intended to teach or to inculcate values or positive attitudes. Kafka uses the parable to draw attention to the negative aspects of the Samsas' lives—devaluation, hopelessness, secrecy, selfishness, and cruelty. At the conclusion, the three surviving family members no longer depend on Gregor for direction and energy. However, the interest in finding a husband for Grete suggests that Mr. Samsa may be pondering a new victim for his laziness, manipulation, and authoritarianism.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SETTING

As a demonstration of confinement, the action of *The Metamorphosis* is, for the most part, limited to the Samsas' upstairs flat on Charlotte Street, presumably near Kafka's home in the old Jewish section of Prague, Czechoslovakia. References to the hospital that he can see across the street from his window as well as the train station, tower clock, and firm indicate Gregor's links to the outside world, which are permanently curtailed after he is transformed into an insect. In addition, the author mentions the Conservatory, business school, high school, public school, the failed family business, a doctor, locksmith, and servants, all elements of the city, but the bizarre alteration in Gregor's body limits the field of action to his room, the living room, foyer, landing, pantry, and kitchen.

In Part II, Kafka creates a new cosmos in Gregor's room. After the first month of acclimating himself to insect-like movement and nocturnal habits, Gregor begins pacing as a means of distraction. He enjoys crisscrossing the walls and ceiling and pausing to hang suspended, a position that gave him "a faint swinging sensation." His sister eases his situation by removing his desk and chest of drawers, then emptying the room of the remaining furniture, except Gregor's couch. In an attempt to rescue some of his past, he presses himself against the glass of a picture of a lady, "which gave a good surface to stick to and soothed his hot belly." The father terrifies Gregor from the large table and chases him back to his

room with apples collected from the buffet. As Gregor declines, his room becomes a storage room and trash repository. Only after his death does the scene shift once more to the city and opportunities outside the Samsa residence.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR SOURCES

For more information about Franz Kafka, Prague, absurdism, and existentialism, consult these sources:

*The Atlas of Literature*, Malcolm Bradbury  
*Existentialism: From Dostoevsky to Sartre*, Walter Kaufmann

*Franz Kafka* (filmstrip), Thomas Klise  
*Franz Kafka* (film), University of Illinois  
*The Metamorphosis* (audiocassette), Caedmon  
*The Stories of Franz Kafka* (audiocassette), Caedmon

Also, consult these websites:

"Fiction of the Absurd," <http://www.creative.net/~along/lit/absurd/fiction.shtml>.

"Introduction to Existentialism," <http://www.columbia.edu/~ta63/exist.html>.

"Prague Interactive Map," <http://cech.cesnet.cz/Praha>

"Prague," [http://www.regus.com/locations2/prague\\_map.html](http://www.regus.com/locations2/prague_map.html).

### MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in this story. Explain each. Section and page numbers note the context from which the item is taken.

1. It's already a distraction for him when he's busy working with his fretsaw. (I, p. 10)  
*(Gregor's hobby is cutting fine, delicate curving lines with a fretsaw, which has a thin, small-toothed blade in a frame. Working with his saw for several evenings, he "carved a little frame" which he placed around the "picture which he had recently cut out of a glossy magazine. . . It showed a lady done up in a fur hat and a fur boa, sitting upright and raising up against the viewer a heavy fur muff in which her whole forearm had disappeared.")*
2. And so he broke out—the women were just leaning against the desk in the next room to catch their breath for a minute—changed his course four times, he really didn't know what to salvage first, then he saw hanging conspicuously on the wall, which was otherwise bare already the picture of the lady all dressed in furs, hurriedly crawled up on it and pressed himself against the glass, which gave a good surface to stick to and soothed his hot belly. (II, p. 35)  
*(The lady in fur is a sexual symbol that represents Gregor's inability to relate to his environment, which his family is rapidly altering against his will. Like Franz Kafka, who broke four engagements with three women, Gregor is unable to possess the two-dimensional woman in the picture, but vicariously soothes his passion against the unyielding glass.)*
3. Gregor tried to drag himself away, as if the startling, unbelievable pain might disappear with a change of place; but he felt nailed to the spot and stretched out his body in a complete confusion of all his senses. (II, p. 39)  
*(Bombarded by apples thrown by Mr. Samsa, Gregor resembles Christ who suffers undeserved torment from a scourge before being stretched out and nailed to a cross. Like Christ, Gregor, after lengthy suffering, suc-*

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*cumbs to the wound in his back.)*

4. And now, although Gregor had lost some of his mobility probably for good because of his wound, and although for the time being he needed long, long minutes to get across his room, like an old war veteran—crawling above ground was out of the question—for this deterioration of his situation he was granted compensation which in his view was entirely satisfactory: every day around dusk the living-room door—which he was in the habit of watching closely for an hour or two beforehand—was opened, so that, lying in the darkness of his room, invisible from the living room, he could see the whole family sitting at the table under the lamp and could listen to their conversation, as it were with general permission; and so it was completely different from before. (III, p. 40)  
*(Gregor, who did serve in the military, as evidenced by the photograph that hangs on his bedroom wall, ironically bears the scars of a combat veteran. His ludicrous injury, caused by a decaying apple lodged in his back, brings him unexpected compassion from the Samsas, who grant him the compensation of a limited part in family activities.)*
5. It seemed strange to Gregor that among all the different noises of eating he kept picking up the sound of their chewing teeth, as if this were a sign to Gregor that you needed teeth to eat with and that even with the best make of toothless jaws you couldn't do a thing. (II, p. 47)  
*(In Gregor's diminished capacity, he is further dehumanized by his lack of teeth and the inability to chew his food. Sunk in despair, he lashes out in self-pity and resentment against the roomers, "I'm dying!" His words reach no one. The scene shifts to Grete's violin music. The scenario, like the familiar story from Aesop's Fables, recalls the pairing of the ant and the grasshopper. The diligent ant, which stored food for the winter, can afford to rest and enjoy its bounty. The frolicsome grasshopper, which fiddled away the summer, beats on the ant's door and begs for food. In this scene, Grete and Gregor together make up the figure of the grasshopper. It is Grete who fiddles and Gregor who starves.)*
6. He was not even startled by the violin as it slipped from under his mother's trembling fingers and fell off her lap with a reverberating clang. (III, p. 51)  
*(The violin, which symbolizes harmony, represents the Samsas' attempts to build a harmonious family unit. Led by Grete, the peacemaker, the evening musicales sweeten a tenuous existence in the wretched apartment. But her innocence and sweetness, without the bolster of strong parental support, are inadequate. Mr. Samsa's blustering tyranny, in contrast with Mrs. Samsa's ineffectiveness, circumvent Grete's attempts to compensate for the monstrosity in the bedroom.)*
7. He still saw that outside the window everything was beginning to grow light. Then, without his consent, his head sank down to the floor, and from his nostrils streamed his last weak breath. (II, p. 54)  
*(The death of Gregor contrasts with accounts of Christ's death in all four gospels. Unlike Christ, who cried out with a loud voice just before giving up his spirit, Gregor dies "without his consent." Then the next day, "early in the morning the cleaning woman came," just as "Mary*

*Magdalene and the other Mary" come to see Christ's tomb. Whereas an angel reports to the women that Christ is risen, the servant treats Gregor's corpse with no respect and bellows, "Come and have a look, it's croaked; it's lying there, dead as a doornail!")*

8. As a matter of fact, Gregor's body was completely flat and dry; this was obvious now for the first time, really, since the body was no longer raised up by his little legs and nothing else distracted the eye. (II, p. 55)  
*(Gregor, who has been unable to eat because of the wound in his back, consumes his internal resources and expires. The remaining shell, symbolic of modern humanity's desiccation in a hostile environment, offers little resistance to the prod of the broom. Devoid of dignity, Gregor is reduced to nothingness. Even a place in the family's memory is denied him as Mr. Samsa urges, "Stop brooding over the past.")*
9. At first the roomer stood still and looked at the floor, as if the thoughts inside his head were fitting themselves together in a new order. (III, p. 56)  
*(It is only after Gregor's death that Mr. Samsa seizes the initiative to eject the offensive boarders, who reestablish their pecking order as they attempt to maintain dignity while exiting the apartment. The Samsas, like the boarders, realign their family structure. Taking the trolley into the country, they find hope in their release from the contretemps they had suffered for months since Gregor's transformation. With Gregor's life behind them, they place hope in their remaining child.)*
10. And it was like a confirmation of their new dreams and good intentions when at the end of the ride their daughter got up first and stretched her young body. (III, p. 58)  
*(Contrasting Gregor's attempts to maneuver his segmented hulk and move with the aid of weak little legs, Grete, Gregor's alter ego, stretches her body like a lithe young animal. Rejuvenated by the jaunt into the country, she becomes "livelier and livelier," her cheeks blossoming and her thoughts turning to the possibility of marriage.)*

### COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the story.

#### Questions 1-5 Literal Level

1. Describe the shape and feel of Gregor's body when he first wakes up to the metamorphosis.  
*(When he awakens at 6:30 A. M., Gregor immediately recognizes that he has been "changed in his bed into a monstrous vermin." He has a "vaulted brown belly, sectioned by arch-shaped ribs" and many thin, wavering legs. He feels vague pain and itching. Looking down his side, he spies "small white dots which he had no idea what to make of."  
In good health, but a little drowsy and hungry, Gregor tries to answer his mother and finds his voice reduced to a garbled chirp. Constrained by his new shape, he employs a rocking, lunging motion to move himself in the bed. Careful to avoid pain to his lower body, he leans over the edge of the mattress and crashes onto the carpet. He pushes himself upright and*

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*attempts to turn the doorknob with his toothless jaws, which exude a brown liquid.)*

2. Recount Mr. Samsa's response to his son's transformation.

*(As Gregor first appears in the partially opened bedroom door, the office manager withdraws and exits toward the foyer. The coffeepot overturns; Gregor cannot stop his urge to snap his jaws. Mr. Samsa, in response to Gregor's distressing metamorphosis, seizes the manager's cane and a heavy newspaper, stamps his feet, and drives Gregor back into his room.)*

*Pitilessly, Mr. Samsa menaces Gregor and hisses "like a wild man." Gregor, unable to move rapidly in reverse, becomes wedged in the doorway. Mr. Samsa ignores his son's disability and forces him on, causing Gregor to scrape his side. Mr. Samsa completes the maneuver with a shove and slams the door shut with the cane.)*

3. Discuss Gregor's food preferences.

*(After he notices Grete's gift of "a bowl filled with fresh milk, in which small slices of white bread were floating," Gregor exults because he is famished. His first taste disappoints him—he no longer likes milk "although it used to be his favorite drink." Repulsed, he crawls into the middle of the room.)*

*Grete returns, notices that he has drunk little of the milk, and removes the offensive food, replacing it with "a wide assortment of things, all spread out on an old newspaper." Over the melange of vegetables, bones, white sauce, and other rejects from the kitchen refuse, Gregor, after Grete's departure, whirs in anticipation of a more satisfying meal. He eats the old food, disdaining the smell of fresh food. Insectlike, he drags the choicest bits to one side and lies lazily replete after his meal.)*

4. Describe Mr. Samsa's assault on Gregor.

*(During the rearrangement of Gregor's room, Mrs. Samsa for the first time faces her son's bestial behavior. Finding him pressed to the picture on the wall, she bawls, "Oh, God, Oh, God!" and collapses on the couch. Grete, for the first time roused to anger against her brother, raises her fist and menaces him with a single cry of "You, Gregor.")*

*The violent scene that follows results from Mr. Samsa's overreaction to his wife's distress. Filled with indignation, he ignores the fact that Gregor has returned to the door of his room and has abstained from flying through the air. Winded by the exertion, Gregor is unable to dodge the pelting of apples, which Mr. Samsa takes from the fruit bowl on the dining room buffet. A lucky shot lodges in Gregor's back. He feels flattened, impaled to the floor. Only through the intervention of Mrs. Samsa does the bombardment end.)*

5. Describe Gregor's health after the bombardment.

*(Gregor suffers "for over a month" with the apple in the flesh of his back. Even though he is again an acknowledged member of the Samsa family, he loses mobility. Despairing, he suffers his rage in silence and stops cleaning himself against the carpet. He gathers "fluff and hairs and scraps of food" along his side.)*

*The authors stress how Gregor's physical well-being deteriorates. He weakens, his neck stiffens, and his little spindly legs give way. Pain courses through his*

*body. Yet, the pain and discomfort of a rotting apple embedded in his back begin to wane as death approaches. Death overtakes him without a struggle.)*

### Questions 6 - 8 Interpretive Level

6. How does life change in the Samsa household after Gregor's death?

*(The immediate reaction to Gregor's death is an understandable relief. The cleaning woman, the first member of the household to realize his death, spreads the word that the insect is "dead as a doornail." Mr. Samsa thanks God. Grete is the only member of the family to demonstrate remorse for her brother, who is reduced to a thin shell.)*

*Gradually, the remaining members of the Samsa family coalesce into a more cohesive group. Mr. Samsa finds the backbone to eject the boarders, who cluster around the corpse at the coaxing of the cleaning woman. As a unit, the Samsas elect to write notes to their employers requesting a day off. Instead of work, they choose positive endeavors, including rest and a walk.*

*The cleaning woman offers to tell how she disposed of Gregor's remains, but Mr. Samsa halts her mid-story. He decides to fire her later that same day. He makes an effort to return the family's thoughts to the future. For the first time in months, they exit the apartment and board a trolley to the country. They discuss their jobs and take comfort in their plans for the future. The older Samsas admire the blossoming of their daughter, who will soon be ready for marriage.)*

7. How does Gregor's experience suggest the circumscribed life of modern humanity?

*(Gregor, like many people, is bound up by convention and the expectations of others. Without indulging himself in much more than his feeble attempt to brighten his room with a cut-out picture from a magazine, he daily pursues a profession that he dislikes, does the bidding of an unpleasant and unsupportive employer, and allows his father to decide his fate. Even the view from Gregor's bed is dreary, with the framed photograph from his army days in full view as well as a glimpse of a hospital from his bedroom window. Both sights bring to mind regimentation and institutionalization.)*

*Early in his life, Gregor has shouldered the debts that his parents incurred from his boss at the fabric company. He has voluntarily taken responsibility for saving money to send Grete to the Conservatory, although the Samsa family is unaware of his sacrifice. As Gregory sums up his life: "I'm under so many obligations to the head of the firm, as you know very well. Besides, I also have my parents and my sister to worry about. I'm in a tight spot.")*

8. Contrast the expectations of Gregor and Grete.

*(Grete, the foil of her brother, represents hope of success. In contrast to Gregor's constricted lifestyle and severe financial dilemma, Grete is still young. At seventeen, she can afford to love her brother and mediate between his needs and their parents' outrage. She performs good deeds, such as cleaning Gregor's room, defending him, and providing him with suitable food and space to crawl. For the boarders she acts as after-dinner entertainer as well as cook.)*

*Still in the developmental stage, Grete studies short-*

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hand and French so as to prepare herself for the business world. At the time of Gregor's transformation, she is the family's only remaining hope. After Gregor's death, the parents naturally turn to her with visions of a brighter future. Whereas Gregor dawdled about in his courtship of the millinery clerk, Grete seems more aggressive in her sexuality as though stalking a husband will be easy work for her.)

### Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. Why is Gregor a martyr?

*(Gregor voluntarily supports the Samsa family, yet he is naively uninformed about the financial situation that exists at the time of Mr. Samsa's financial collapse. At one time a smiling, posturing military lieutenant, Gregor is quickly reduced to a humdrum fabric salesman with daily responsibilities that rob him of his youth and enthusiasm. Like the morning train, he follows a prescribed route and serves his boss, who becomes a mirror image of the controlling, short-tempered, unforgiving father.)*

*The unforeseen transformation depletes Gregor of all hope for the future. Without his job, he can no longer care for the family. Overnight, he is reduced to a worthless insect. The family passes through a series of outlooks—from rage to humiliation to revulsion to despair. By the time Gregor dies, he receives no warmth or involvement in his family. The inhumane lifestyle of the past five years takes palpable, tangible form when he is changed into an insect.*

*A martyr to the support of the Samsa family, Gregor ceases to have human worth or dignity. No one speaks to him or touches him. Even in death, the cleaning woman handles his corpse with a broom and disposes of him like so much rubbish. Mr. Samsa crowns Gregor's martyrdom with a suitably dehumanizing epitaph: "now we can thank God.")*

10. How does this work reflect the struggles of Kafka's own life?

*(The son of a tyrant, Franz lived under his father's roof long after most young men would have established residences and families of their own. Kafka sought steady relationships with women and even produced an illegitimate son, but none of his four engagements led to marriage. Like Gregor, Kafka worked for a bureaucratic office in a dead-end job. No aspect of his life suggested that he would ever find self-actualization or normal satisfaction.)*

*Well educated and sensitive to the web that formed about him, Kafka may well have written this story as an expression of his personal despair at the futility of such an existence. Perhaps he believed that all twentieth-century life would one day boil down to a series of petty activities performed without joy in pursuit of temporary security. Whatever his purpose, his story has become the rallying cry of iconoclasts who despise modern humanity's incarceration in meaninglessness.)*

### Questions 11 and 12 Creative Level

11. Apply the definition of beast fable or parable to *The Metamorphosis*. Using elements of the story, decide how it fits the requirements of either genre. Compose your answer in a well-organized theme.
12. Select the opening scene to rewrite as a play. Make a list of props necessary for the scenario. Design a two-

part set that will allow the audience to see both Gregor and the people opposite his bedroom door.

## ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

### Drama and Speech

1. Pantomime several conversations that are only implied, such as the messenger boy's comments to the manager about Gregor's absence from the 5:00 train and the boarders' complaints to each other.
2. Compose a short speech in which you describe the function of each family member. Comment on the father's demand for more appreciation, Mrs. Samsa's histrionics, and Grete's lengthy stretch in the final scene.
3. Draw settings for a stage version of *The Metamorphosis*. Show the placement of actors, music, costumes, props, sound effects, and lighting. Include classroom discussions of family violence, arguments, boarders, disposal of junk and garbage, and rearrangement of furniture.
4. Role-play the part of a female character turning into another form, such as a chameleon, moth, slug, elm, daffodil, woodbine, dolphin, eel, geode, cloud, or comet. Relate your transformation in the style of a Greek myth, such as the story of Narcissus, the abduction of Persephone, or the punishment of Niobe, Echo, Hippolytus, or Ariadne.

### Psychology and Health

1. With a group, explain events from the story that express these important concepts: delusion, whim, forethought, fantasy, and premonition. Contrast changes in Gregor's mobility and accessibility with his abiding love of his mother and sister and distaste for his job.
2. Analyze family interaction by simplifying a single scene. For example, give a detailed sketch of Mr. Samsa driving Gregor back into his room, Grete trying to drag furniture from Gregor's room, the cleaning woman's reference to Gregor as a dung beetle, or Mrs. Samsa's attempt to earn money by sewing lingerie.
3. Describe in a short speech the effects of loneliness, insecurity, low self-esteem, isolation, pain, frustration, and rejection on Gregor. How does his condition force the family to examine aims and goals? Why does the family progress at his expense? How does his sacrifice propose new avenues of expression? Why does Grete's stretch in the final scene suggest a butterfly emerging from a cocoon?
4. Explain in a theme how the author characterizes Gregor's regression into an insect mentality. Why does he like to climb the ceiling? When does he eat? Why does he sleep under the couch? What effect does the cool glass have on his underside?
5. Characterize the rescuer's relationship to a victim. Include Grete feeding Gregor stale scraps wrapped in newspaper, Mr. Samsa throwing apples at Gregor, and Grete looking for a restorative for Mrs. Samsa. Explain aloud why Mr. Samsa has cast himself in the role of victim of financial setback. How does Gregor fail him in the role of rescuer?

### Language Arts

1. Compose an extended definition of insecurity in which you compare Gregor to the focal character in Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees*, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, James

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Thurber's "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," or T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock."

2. Compose a first person account of the manager's demand that Gregor answer questions about missing cash and that he explain his tardiness. List questions for Grete to ask the manager about Gregor's contentment on the job and the amount of money he earns for long hours as a traveling salesman.
3. Survey critical response to *The Metamorphosis* both at the time the novel was published and now. Express how current attitudes toward psychology influence critical appraisals.
4. Make a time line of events in the story. Emphasize the period of time that Gregor supports the family, the event that triggers Mr. Samsa's retirement, the day that Gregor intends to announce his plan to send Grete to the Conservatory, and the length of time that Gregor survives in insect form.
5. Read aloud descriptions of the grotesque. Include isolation in John Gardner's *Grendel*, illustrations of community execution in Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery," evil incarnate in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," attempted suicide in Sylvia Plath's "Daddy," the loss of a finger in Jane Campion's *The Piano*, two sides of a personality at war in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, obsession in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart," and mental illness in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* or Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Discuss minor elements that trigger extensive episodes or depressions.
6. Research the problems of the translator in adapting a story from one language to another. Add information about Edwin Muir, the translator of Kafka's work.

### Literature

1. Make an oral report on the theme of compassion. Summarize paragraphs that indicate an unselfishness and warmth in Grete and rising hostility toward her brother. Include her age in your assessment of the sister.
2. Describe aloud the difference between Mr. Samsa as protector, head of the family, retiree, aggressor, and bank employee. What clues suggest that he may take a renewed interest in family?
3. Contrast minor characters in terms of action, control, and compassion. Include cook, widowed cleaning woman, manager, messenger boy, and boarders. Which characters are stereotypes? Which seem like characterizations of real people? Which have the most influence on the action?
4. Discuss a list of images from the story that appeal to the five senses, for instance "he devoured the cheese, the vegetables, and the sauce; the fresh foods, on the other hand, he did not care for; he couldn't even stand their smell and even dragged the things he wanted to eat a bit farther away."
5. Draw a Venn diagram representing the parallel lifestyles and activities of Mr. Samsa and Gregor. Note the aspects they share, for example, their uniforms and consecutive roles as provider. List their differences, particularly toward money, security, compassion, self, and family unity.
6. Suggest ways this story could be written as a novel. Add

characters to the plot and suggest ways that the family might help Gregor heal from his wounds. Create a chapter on ways to tempt Gregor to eat more. Show an insect specialist examining Gregor's corpse.

### Religion

1. Lead a debate about the implied connection with Christian holidays. In what ways does Gregor's interest in Christmas and his death in late March suggest a suffering Christ figure?
2. Form a team of readers to tape expanded, imaginative episodes of *The Metamorphosis*. Create scenes in which Mrs. Samsa summons a priest to discuss the status of Gregor's soul.

### Economics

1. Explain to a small group why the money situation in the Samsa home is obscured by secrecy. Suggest ways that the family can develop trust, for example, by pooling resources and drawing up a list of necessities and future goals. Discuss why Christmas seems passed over to Gregor.
2. Lead a symposium on the subject of finance and family relationships. Determine whether the Samsas are normal or abnormal.

### Cinema

1. View various films featuring grotesque subjects, e. g. *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Elephant Man*, *Mask*, *The Illustrated Man*, *Planet of the Apes*, *Star Wars*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Tell Me That You Love Me Junie Moon*, *THX-1138*, and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Discuss why filmmakers focus on perverse behaviors or oddities of body, behavior, or dress.
2. Create a story board account of a minor incident in the action. Choose from these: Gregor refuses milk and bread, a bottle is broken during the moving, Gregor points to the areas that need cleaning, Mr. Samsa watches the boarders depart down the stairs, and Mrs. Samsa and Grete serve meat and potatoes to the three boarders.

### Science

1. Compose an extended definition of physical stability. Note areas of Gregor's life that vary from day to day.
2. Explain briefly the bizarre nature of the insect, for example, whirring to indicate pleasure. Show one view immediately after his metamorphosis and another of his depleted physique after his death.

### Art

1. Create a bulletin board contrasting Gregor in human and insect form. List the physical changes that alter his function, particularly his short, thin legs, sticky feet, hard shell, jaws, tastes, and instincts. Name analogous parts that once served him as a human.
2. Using desktop publishing or other media, design a picture of a dung beetle for an illustrated entomology text, a banner advertising apartments for rent, a business card for a manager, first aid for fainting, an epitaph for Gregor, a samples list for a textile salesman, an ornate uniform for a bank employee, a schematic drawing of a city trolley line, an extended definition of fantasy or absurdism, and a sketch of the Samsa apartment or a violin.
3. Make a poster or website of elements from the story



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plotted on a Freytag diagram covering exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and conclusion. Show why the change in Grete is significant to Gregor's survival.

4. Create a bulletin board illustrating visual aspects of the story.

### Social Studies

1. Compose a short segment in which you report on female roles, particularly servant, landlady, mother, cook, cleaner, student, clerk, nurse, housewife, seamstress, musician, and budding young woman. Determine which roles have the greatest influence on Gregor's love for his mother and sister. Characterize changes in attitudes toward women.
2. Outline details about the rise of Napoleon. Determine why his behavior and example influenced art, music, and literature.

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Examine detailed descriptions of Gregor's metamorphosis and find pictures of similar insects. Compose a scientific analysis of the changes that alter Gregor from human to insect.
2. Read aloud T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." Compare the insecure protagonist with both Gregor Samsa and Franz Kafka.
3. Select background music for a reading of the story from the works of modern composers such as Hindemith, Barth, Kasschau, or Mahler.
4. Discuss your response to Mr. Samsa's anger, violence, arguments, posturing, and the tyranny of the boarders. Explain how he changes when he wears his uniform. Why does Mr. Samsa appear to gain strength while Gregor dwindles?
5. Compose a scene in which the family commemorates Gregor with a ceremony, receiving of mourners, burial, and grave marker. Create an appropriate service and epitaph for him.
6. Read Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. Contrast Willy Loman's view of a traveling salesman's life with that of Gregor. Decide which of the two protagonists is the more successful and the more satisfied.
7. Make a time line of historical and political events that occur in Europe during the first 25 years of the twentieth century. Emphasize those which reflect the mood and outlook of Kafka's writing.
8. Compose an informal essay on the beast fables of Aesop, Joel Chandler Harris, and La Fontaine. Determine whether the elements of beast lore apply to *The Metamorphosis*, particularly the need for a simplistic moral.
9. Compose a similar bizarre tale in which a human being takes an unprecedented shape or form. Stress the grotesque details that alienate the central character from normal relationships.
10. Select three conflicting interpretations of the story and write a theme supporting the one that reflects your own analysis.

### ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. Contrast the activity in Gregor's former life with the torpor and insect-like scuttling of his metamorphosis.

2. List scenes from the novel that express contrasting attitudes toward honesty, love, optimism, self-esteem, loss, responsibility, pride, poverty, prestige, dependence, suffering, and martyrdom. Next to each, indicate what you think is the author's personal philosophy.
3. Compose a brief definition of normalcy as it applies to the Samsa family. Account for their attempt to hide Gregor after they take in boarders.
4. List examples of compassion and discuss their importance to the plot, such as Grete's attempt to feed Gregor and the removal of furniture to leave Gregor room to crawl.

### FRANZ KAFKA'S WORKS

"Description of a Fight" (1905)  
"The Boilerman" (1913)  
"The Judgment" (1913)  
"Meditations" (1913)  
"The Metamorphosis" (1915)  
"Letter to His Father" (1919)  
"The Hunter Gracchus" (1919)  
"A Report to an Academy" (1919)  
"The Country Doctor" (1919)  
"A Hunger Artist" (1922)  
"A Little Woman" (1923)  
"Josephine the Songstress—or the Mice-Nation" (1923)  
"The Burrow" (1923)  
"In the Penal Colony" (1923)  
*The Castle* (1925)  
*The Trial* (1926)  
*Amerika* (1927)  
"The Great Wall of China" (1931)  
*Description of a Struggle* (1936)  
*A Franz Kafka Miscellany* (1940)  
*Parables* (1947)  
*The Diaries of Franz Kafka* (1949)  
*Letters to Milena* (1952)  
*Dearest Father* (1954)  
*Letters to Ottla and the Family* (1982)

### RELATED READING

Isabel Allende, *House of the Spirits*  
Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*  
Toni Cade Bambara, "Blues Ain't No Mockin' Bird"  
T. S. Eliot, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*  
Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*  
John Gardner, *Grendel*  
Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"  
Eugene Ionescu, *Rhinoceros*  
Barbara Kingsolver, *The Bean Trees*  
Robin McKinley, *Beauty*  
Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*  
Sylvia Plath, "Daddy"  
Edgar Allan Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart"  
Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*  
Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*  
James Thurber, "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty"

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## TEACHER'S NOTES

## THE METAMORPHOSIS

### VOCABULARY TEST

Select a word from the list below to complete each of the following sentences. Note that you will have words left over when you finish.

animated	curtly	foyer	nonplussed	strides
barricade	debacle	gorging	nostrils	superfluous
blandishments	decrepity	immaculate	perverse	topple
bolsters	delusion	immobile	probingly	utilized
chemise	despair	impracticable	repress	verge
conspicuously	distracted	inquisitive	reverberating	warily
corrosive	exclamation	louts	rile	whirring

1. He was afraid with some certainty that in the very next moment a general \_\_\_\_\_ would burst over him, and he waited.
2. He was not even startled by the violin as it slipped from under his mother's trembling fingers and fell off her lap with a \_\_\_\_\_ clang.
3. One could see the covers and \_\_\_\_\_ on the beds, obeying his sister's practiced hands, fly up and arrange themselves.
4. Gregor's legs began \_\_\_\_\_ now that he was going to eat.
5. "How about going back to sleep for a few minutes and forgetting all this nonsense," he thought, but that was completely \_\_\_\_\_, since he was used to sleeping on his right side and in his present state could not get into that position.
6. With his last glance he saw the door of his room burst open as his mother rushed out ahead of his screaming sister, in her \_\_\_\_\_, for his sister had partly undressed her while she was unconscious in order to let her breathe more freely . . .
7. And in spite of his state, he was not ashamed to inch out a little farther on the \_\_\_\_\_ living-room floor.
8. She came a little earlier than usual and caught Gregor still looking out the window, \_\_\_\_\_ and so in an excellent position to be terrifying.
9. Even now he had been on the \_\_\_\_\_ of forgetting, and only his mother's voice, which he had not heard for so long, had shaken him up.
10. With a kind of \_\_\_\_\_ obstinacy his father refused to take off his official uniform even in the house.
11. Gregor's mother plucked him by the sleeves, whispered \_\_\_\_\_ into his ear, his sister dropped her homework in order to help her mother, but all this was of no use.
12. Without being in the least \_\_\_\_\_, she had once accidentally opened the door of Gregor's room.
13. For this reason many things had become \_\_\_\_\_, and though they certainly weren't salable, on the other hand they could not just be thrown out.
14. Her face was inclined to one side, sadly and \_\_\_\_\_ her eyes followed the lines of music.
15. Here he spat \_\_\_\_\_ and decisively on the floor—"I give notice as of now."
16. In those days Gregor's sole concern had been to do everything in his power to make the family forget as quickly as possible the business disaster which had plunged everyone into a state of total \_\_\_\_\_.
17. And in the \_\_\_\_\_ that they were all following his efforts with suspense, he clamped his jaws madly on the key with all the strength he could muster.
18. "That was the voice of an animal," said the manager, in a tone \_\_\_\_\_ soft compared with the mother's yelling.
19. He could not \_\_\_\_\_ his panting from the exertion, and from time to time he had to rest.
20. Constantly intent only on rapid crawling, he hardly noticed that not a word, not an \_\_\_\_\_ from his family interrupted him.
21. And already the two girls were running with rustling skirts through the \_\_\_\_\_—how could his sister have gotten dressed so quickly?—and tearing open the door to the apartment.
22. Gregor's body was completely flat and dry; this was obvious now for the first time, really, since the body was no longer raised up by his little legs and nothing else \_\_\_\_\_ the eye.
23. You \_\_\_\_\_ yourself in your room, answer only 'yes' and 'no,' cause your parents serious, unnecessary worry, and you neglect—I mention this only in passing—your duties to the firm in a really shocking manner.
24. Of course these were no longer the animated conversations of the old days, which Gregor used to remember with a certain \_\_\_\_\_ in small hotel rooms when he'd had to throw himself warily into the damp bedding.
25. "Look how these roomers are \_\_\_\_\_ themselves, and I'm dying!"

## THE METAMORPHOSIS

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Identify Elements (40 points)

Place an **X** beside any statement that can be proved by events in the story.

- 1. Although Gregor suffers pain before he dies, he is at peace at the moment of death.
- 2. Grete longs to go to the Conservatory to study violin.
- 3. Mr. Samsa suffers from overweight and Mrs. Samsa from asthma.
- 4. As the manager fumes, Gregor wishes that Grete could intercede for him.
- 5. Gregor will be fired for missing the 5:00 train.
- 6. The picture of the girl dressed in fur reminds Gregor of someone he once knew.
- 7. The boarders pity the hard work of Mrs. Samsa and Grete, who sew lingerie to earn money for the family.
- 8. Mr. Samsa uses a cane and a newspaper to drive Gregor back into his room.
- 9. Grete studies both shorthand and French to prepare herself for a good job.
- 10. Anna resigns out of disgust with Gregor's filthy insect body.
- 11. Gregor has good memories of his time in the army.
- 12. After serving as a stock clerk, Gregor rises to the position of traveling salesman.
- 13. Grete at times shows compassion for Gregor and at other times yells at him.
- 14. Gregor's money has run out by the end of the story.
- 15. Because of the shape of Gregor's jaw, he is unable to enjoy a bowl of milk with white bread in it.
- 16. Gregor resents changes to his room.
- 17. At first Gregor attempts to keep himself clean but later grows dusty.
- 18. Mr. Samsa resents his wife's inability to cope with difficult situations and her complaints about the servants.
- 19. The Samsas could move Gregor to a smaller apartment by placing him in a box and punching air holes for him to breathe through.
- 20. Gregor dies with some understanding of why he has been made to suffer.

## THE METAMORPHOSIS

### Part II: Fill-in (30 points)

Complete each sentence with a word or phrase. Place your answer in the blanks.

1. Gregor looks forward to the \_\_\_\_\_ season, when he will announce his plans to send Grete to the Conservatory.
2. Gregor works as a salesman for a \_\_\_\_\_ company.
3. By trial and error, Gregor learns that the \_\_\_\_\_ part of his body is the most sensitive.
4. The smooth rhythm of a \_\_\_\_\_ motion enables Gregor to maneuver in bed.
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ arrives to find out why Gregor missed the five a.m. train.
6. The \_\_\_\_\_ hounds the Samsas for repayment of old debts.
7. The head of the firm implies that \_\_\_\_\_ may have embezzled company money.
8. Mr. Samsa sends Anna for a \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Grete sends her mother for a \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Brown liquid flows from Gregor's mouth over the \_\_\_\_\_ that he is trying to turn.
11. Gregor believes that \_\_\_\_\_ aren't well liked in the company office.
12. Gregor attempts to crawl under the \_\_\_\_\_ to sleep.
13. Gregor uses his \_\_\_\_\_ to help him find his way in the dark.
14. Gregor is revolted by the \_\_\_\_\_ of fresh vegetables and cheese.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ begs to visit Gregor.

### Part III: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe Gregor's attempts to adapt to his new body.
2. Cite examples of rigidity in the Samsa household.
3. Contrast the attention Gregor receives from males and females.
4. Analyze Grete's pose as an insect emerging from the larval stage in the final scene.

## THE METAMORPHOSIS

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Quotation Identification (20 points)

Identify the person speaking or thinking in each quotation below. Select answers from the list that follows.

Anna            boss            Gregor            lady in fur            Mr. Samsa            new maid  
boarder        cleaning woman        Grete            manager            Mrs. Samsa

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Let me go to Gregor . . . don't you understand that I have to go to him?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Gregor . . . the manager has come and wants to be informed why you didn't catch the early train.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. I thought I knew you to be a quiet, reasonable person, and now you suddenly seem to want to start strutting about, flaunting strange whims.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Have I become less sensitive?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Come and have a look, it's croaked; it's lying there, dead as a doornail!  
\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Just look how thin he was.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 7. Where's breakfast?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 8. Sir, don't go away without a word to tell me you think I'm at least partly right!  
\_\_\_\_\_ 9. Look how long you're sewing again today!  
\_\_\_\_\_ 10. What a life. So this is the peace of my old age.

#### Part II: Short Answer (30 points)

Supply a word or phrase that answers each of the following questions.

1. How long has Gregor been supporting the family?
2. In what month does Gregor die?
3. What entertainment is provided for the boarders?
4. Who threatens Gregor with a cane and a newspaper?
5. Who wears a uniform with gold buttons?
6. With what does the cleaning woman prod Gregor's body?
7. Who looks forward to marrying?
8. What product does Gregor sell?
9. Who cooks for the family after the maid quits?
10. What does the cleaning woman call Gregor?
11. How many boarders do the Samsas take in?
12. Who cleans Gregor's room?
13. Where does Gregor scrape and bruise his side?
14. Who tries to force the boarders into their rooms?
15. At what hour does Gregor die?

#### Part III: Identification (10 points)

Explain the significance of the following objects.

1. fretsaw
2. girl with the fur muff
3. hospital
4. samples
5. lingerie

#### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain how Gregor's position in the family differs from Grete's.
2. Contrast the role of Gregor's parents in solving their dilemma.
3. Discuss how family behavior alters when the boarders arrive.
4. Analyze the reasons for Gregor's suffering.

## THE METAMORPHOSIS

### ANSWER KEY

#### VOCABULARY TEST

- |                   |                   |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. debacle        | 14. probingly     |
| 2. reverberating  | 15. curtly        |
| 3. bolsters       | 16. despair       |
| 4. whirring       | 17. delusion      |
| 5. impracticable  | 18. conspicuously |
| 6. chemise        | 19. repress       |
| 7. immaculate     | 20. exclamation   |
| 8. immobile       | 21. foyer         |
| 9. verge          | 22. distracted    |
| 10. perverse      | 23. barricade     |
| 11. blandishments | 24. nostalgia     |
| 12. inquisitive   | 25. gorging       |
| 13. superfluous   |                   |

#### COMPREHENSION TEST A

##### Part I: Identify Elements (40 points)

- |      |      |       |       |
|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. X | 6.   | 11.   | 16. X |
| 2.   | 7.   | 12. X | 17. X |
| 3. X | 8. X | 13. X | 18.   |
| 4. X | 9. X | 14.   | 19. X |
| 5.   | 10.  | 15.   | 20.   |

##### Part II: Fill-in (30 points)

- |              |                        |
|--------------|------------------------|
| 1. Christmas | 9. doctor              |
| 2. fabric    | 10. key                |
| 3. lower     | 11. traveling salesmen |
| 4. rocking   | 12. couch              |
| 5. manager   | 13. antennae           |
| 6. boss      | 14. smell              |
| 7. Gregor    | 15. Mrs. Samsa         |
| 8. locksmith |                        |

##### Part III: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

#### COMPREHENSION TEST B

##### Part I: Quotation Identification (20 points)

- |                   |               |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 1. Mrs. Samsa     | 6. Grete      |
| 2. Mr. Samsa      | 7. boarder    |
| 3. manager        | 8. Gregor     |
| 4. Gregor         | 9. Mr. Samsa  |
| 5. cleaning woman | 10. Mr. Samsa |

##### Part II: Short Answer (30 points)

- |                 |                         |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 1. five years   | 9. Grete and Mrs. Samsa |
| 2. March        | 10. dung beetle         |
| 3. violin music | 11. 3                   |
| 4. Mr. Samsa    | 12. Grete               |
| 5. Mr. Samsa    | 13. doorway             |
| 6. broom        | 14. Mr. Samsa           |
| 7. Grete        | 15. 3:00 A. M.          |
| 8. fabric       |                         |

##### Part III: Identification (10 points)

1. With his fretsaw, Gregor makes a small frame in which to hang a picture he cut from a magazine.
2. The picture in the frame is of a girl with a fur muff. Gregor climbs the wall and sticks to the picture to cool his underside.
3. From his window, Gregor looks through the rain to the hospital across the street.
4. Gregor promises the manager that he will get his fabric samples and leave on the next train.
5. Mrs. Samsa and Grete find work sewing lingerie in their home.

##### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.



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