

# The Trial by Franz Kafka

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## Pre-Reading

Franz Kafka is acclaimed to be one of the greatest and most creative literary minds of the 20th century (even having the term “kafkaesque” coined after him), so I feel it almost necessary to dive into what is said about his writing style and to get familiar with it before reading the book.

Kafka is said to have an **absurdist and existentialist**<sup>1</sup> writing style. Kafka deals very skillfully with the concept of existential anxiety, prompting along a very piercing question: who can we look at and point to, **who can we find fault in when no singular individual has done anything wrong?** In this way, Kafka calls out the needless and suffocating bureaucracy of the world (indeed, there have been comparisons made to modern day insurance companies).

It must be noted, though, that the modern image of Kafka as a mysterious, depressing figure is very far off. The usage of absurdism is in a way comical, a dark humor of sorts, and Kafka was known for reading his writings in front of friends and laughing alongside them. Kafka distorts and takes to the extreme the problems, dreads, and dreams of his own as a form of relief.

Kafka also explores the ideas of loneliness and identity, in part a projection of his own life experience. It will be interesting to see what of it still rings true in modern day society.

Ultimately, what follows will be a collection of annotations of the novel: summary, commentary, and further analysis. Looking back at my progress this year in terms of note-taking and analysis, I am slightly disappointed. While I am doing just fine in AP Lit from a grades standpoint, I am not here because of a grade; I am here to expand my intellectual ability in literature. I can only take away from this class what put into it, and so I desire to use this time to take genuinely proper notes.

Without further digression, we proceed.

■ 1. One would think these to perhaps be at odds with each other, which is interesting.

## **Introduction**

An introduction to the book by George Steiner. I often feel as though introductions are much more aptly placed at the end of classics. They might be a good introduction to the author, but I am unfamiliar with the plot of the book and wish not to be spoiled. I will come back to this after reading.

## Chapter I

**Summary.** Joseph K.'s<sup>2</sup> morning routine is interrupted when he finds two warders in his apartment (the landlord is a lady called Frau Grubach I think). One of the men is named Franz<sup>3</sup>, and he tells K. that he is under arrest, and thus cannot leave the room. Franz does not answer any further questions on why, and professes that he is merely a lackey<sup>4</sup> whose only job is to keep K. detained. K. cites the constitution as a reason for why this cannot be done to him, but he also remarks that he does not know the exact Law<sup>5</sup>, to the jest of the warders.

All the while, a nosy old lady is viewing the sight through a window.

**Thoughts.** I think the book does a very good job of portraying confusion. K. initially thinks that the entire situation is a farce, a joke played by his friends which is a very human initial thought.

■ **2.** I find it interesting that he is always referred to as K. rather than Joseph. In addition, we don't actually learn of his last name.

■ **3.** Like Franz Kafka, which is very sus.

■ **4.** Already we have some sense of bureaucracy.

■ **5.** Capitalized exactly like this in the book.

## Chapter II

**Chapter III**

## Chapter IV

**Chapter V**

## Chapter VI



**Chapter VII**

## Chapter VIII

## Chapter IX

## Chapter X

**Appendix I**

## Appendix II

**Post-Reading**