

The Metamorphosis

In "The Metamorphosis" by Franz Kafka, symbolism plays a crucial role in conveying themes and ideas.

① The Vermin (Bug):

Gregor's transformation into a vermin symbolizes his feelings of isolation, alienation and disconnection from the society. It also represents his loss of identity and humanity.

"As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect."
(Part 1, Chapter 1)

② The Room:

"His room, a regular human room, only a little on the small side, lay quiet between the four familiar walls."
(Part 1, Chap 1)

His room symbolizes his inner world, reflecting his mental and emotional state. The room's confinement and clutter mirror Gregor's feelings of suffocation & disorientation.

③ Food:

"He could not remember ever having eaten such a delicious meal."

(Part 1, chap 2, referring to rotten food)

Gregor's inability to eat human food and his preference for rotten food represent his disconnection from humanity and his decaying sense of self.

④ The Apple:

"The apple lodged in his back, where it remained."

(Part 2, Chap 5)

It symbolizes the wounds and scars of his past, as well as

the guilt and shame he carries.

⑤ The Window:

“He would often stand at the window, looking out at the street.”

(Part 1, Chapter 1)

It serves as a symbol of his longing for freedom, escape, and connection with the outside world.

⑥ The Family:

“His father, mother, and sister were already up, and they were surprised to see that Gregor had not yet left.”

(Part 1, Chapter 1)

Gregor's family members represent different aspects of society and its expectations.

⑦ The Metamorphosis:

“He was lying on his back, as hard as armor, and when he lifted his head a little, he saw his own belly. Slightly domed and

and divided by arches into
stiff sections."

(Part 1, Chapter 1)

This highlights the
absurdity and uncertainty of
Gregor's transformation:

Excellent

Grete's image at the end of
the novella:

(Question no 2)

Multiple Metamorphosis

OR
Significance of the Title "The Metamorphosis"

Metamorphosis refers to a profound change in form, shape, or structure, often implying a transformation from one state or condition to another. It reflects the transformative journey of the protagonist Gregor Samsa. There are many kinds of metamorphosis

- Physical Metamorphosis
- Emotional and Psychological metamorphosis
- Gregor's metamorphosis from innocence to maturity
- Father's metamorphosis from authority
- The Mother's metamorphosis from Nurturer to Resigner

● The Family's Metamorphosis from unity to Disintegration.

① Gregor's Physical Metamorphosis:

Gregor's transformation into a giant insect-like creature is the most obvious metamorphosis. This change forces him to adapt to a new physical form and confront the consequences of his altered identity.

② Gregor's emotional and Psychological metamorphosis:

As Gregor navigates his new physical form, he undergoes a profound emotional and psychological transformation. He becomes increasingly isolated, withdrawn, and disconnected from his family & humanity.

③ Grete's Metamorphosis from innocence to maturity:

Gregor's sister, Grete, undergoes a significant transformation as she takes on more

responsibilities and confronts the harsh realities of her brother's condition. Her innocence and naivety give way to a more mature and worldly perspective.

④ The Father's metamorphosis:

The father's character undergoes a metamorphosis from a figure of authority and dominance to one of impotence and desperation. His inability to cope with Gregor's transformation and provide for his family leads to a decline in his stature and influence.

⑤ The Mother's metamorphosis:

The mother's transformation is one of resignation and acceptance. Initially, she tries to care for Gregor and maintain a sense of normalcy, but ultimately, she becomes overwhelmed and resigned to her son's fate.

⑥ The Family's metamorphosis:

The Samsa family's metamorphosis

is one of disintegration and fragmentation. As Gregor's transformation progresses, the family's unity and cohesion begins to break down, revealing underlying tensions and conflicts.

These multiple metamorphoses in the "The Metamorphosis" create a rich and complex narrative that explores themes of identity, alienation and human condition.

World Literature in Translation

The Metamorphosis Character analysis:-

① Gregor Samsa:

A traveling sales man who hates his job but is forced to keep it in order to support his family and pay off his father's debt. Gregor finds himself into a giant insect and it was suddenly. Never coming to terms with his metamorphosis, he struggles with intense feelings of guilt as if his inability to support his family were own his fault. Though freed from his job, Gregor is now a burden to his family and is kept locked in his room. Isolated and neglected, Gregor is a metaphor for the human being oppressed by capitalism and alienated from work, family and himself.

② Grete

Gregor's younger sister. She is the only one in the family with whom Gregor was intimate. At first, she takes it upon herself to (change) clean his room and feed him. With time, however, she loses interest in Gregor and leaves him alone. Grete, who first cared so much for Gregor, is also the first to assert that the family must get rid of him. Gregor had planned to use all his money to send Grete to the Conservatory to study violin, and her playing awakes his humanity.

③ Mr. Samsa:

Gregor's father. Having lived a "labourious though unsuccessful life" and collapsed his business, has become exceptionally lazy, doing nothing while his son earns all the money. He is suspicious of the transformed Gregor from the beginning and always assumes the worst if his son emerges from his room.

He first wounds Gregor while trying to shove him into his room and then cripples him by throwing an apple into his back.

④ Mrs. Samsa:

Gregor's mother is also forced to go to work to make money for the family. Her relation to Gregor is one of dutiful and loving mother but her tendency to faint upon seeing him is not conducive to helping him. After begging to see Gregor, she is finally allowed in his room, but faints as soon as he appears. She then proceeds to save Gregor from his father's apple-throwing wrath. Yet, since Mrs. Samsa is extremely quiet and always does what she is told, her opinions on family affairs remain unknown and her personality is subsumed in her husband's authority.

* affairs
(relationships)

⑤ Chief:-

Gregor's boss at work is

the great symbol of everything wrong with capitalism. He sits behind his desk talking down to his employees. Gregor knows that if he calls in sick for the first time in five years, his chief would come in person to call him lazy.

⑥ Chief clerk:

He is the chief's mouthpiece. He himself arrives at Gregor's house when the former is late to late work and thus throws the entire family into disorder. He tells the Gregor's family that he is under suspicion of having stolen money and that his work is very unsatisfactory, though this isn't true.

⑦ Cook

Begs for permission to leave the family as soon as she finds out about Gregor's metamorphosis. She is extremely grateful when she is allowed to go and promises to tell no one about Gregor.

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The Metamorphosis

Gregor as an absurd character:

Gregor Samsa, the protagonist of Franz Kafka's novella "The Metamorphosis" is a quintessential absurd character. Before his transformation he was also an absurd character because he was doing the job unwillingly and due to the debt of his father. It also shows the absurdity because he can not do to get rid of this job.

His transformation into a giant insect like creature is a manifestation of the absurdity that pervades the narrative.

● Physical Absurdity:

Gregor's physical transformation is a prime example of absurdity. He wakes up one morning to find himself changed into a vermin, with a hard shell, multiple legs and an inability to speak. This transformation is absurd because of it is unexplained, unexpected, and irreversibly alters Gregor's life.

● Existential Absurdity

Gregor's situation is existentially absurd because he is trapped in a body that is no longer human. He is unable to communicate with his family, and his physical needs are no longer compatible with his human desires. This absurdity highlights the meaninglessness of Gregor's existence, as he is forced to navigate a world that is no longer suited to his new form.

● Social Absurdity:

His family, who were once dependent on him for financial support, now view him but as a burden. The absurdity lies in the fact that Gregor's physical transformation has rendered him unable to fulfill his social roles, leading to a breakdown in his relationships with his family.

● Absurdity of human nature:

Through Gregor's character, Kafka highlights the absurdity of human nature. Despite his physical transformation, Gregor's thoughts and feelings remain human. This absurdity underscores the disconnection between human nature and the external world, leading to a sense of alienation and disconnection.

In conclusion, Gregor is an absurd character whose physical, existential, social, and human nature absurdities drive the narrative of novella.

World Literatures in

Translation

(Question # 01)

Comparison between Gregor and Meursault:

The Outsider

Gregor Samsa from Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" and Meursault from Albert Camus' "The Stranger" are two iconic protagonists in 20th century literature. Both protagonists who embody themes of alienation, isolation and existential struggle. Though the stories they inhabit are quite different in tone and setting, a comparison between the two characters reveals interesting similarities and differences in their responses to their environments, their roles in their societies and their inner lives.

① Alienation and Isolation:

- Gregor's alienation is both literal and physical. He wakes up one morning to find himself transformed into a giant insect, a change that isolates him from the world, including his family and society.

- Meursault's alienation is more existential and emotional rather than physical. Throughout "The Stranger", he seems disconnected from the emotional or social norms around him. For example, he does not grieve his mother's death, which sets the stage for his alienation from society. Meursault's indifference to life events contrasts sharply with the societal expectations of emotion making him an outsider.

② Relationship with Family and Society:

Gregor Samsa's relationship with his family is central to

his story. Initially, he works tirelessly to support them, but once transformed, they gradually become more distant and resentful. His family's treatment of him after his metamorphosis highlights the fragility of familial bonds when they are built on dependency rather than love.

- Meursault's relationship with his family is less significant in "The Stranger". His mother's death is a starting point for his emotional indifference and he does not appear to feel a deeper need for family connection. His actions are largely dictated by immediate physical desires rather than social or familial obligations.

- Gregor is forced into a role as the breadwinner for his family, a societal ~~expectation~~ expectation that alienates him emotionally. His inability to meet his role after his transformation leads to further estrangement from society and his family.

- Meursault's response or interaction with society is marked by his rejection of conventional norms. His apathy toward society or societal expectations leads to his condemnation. In the end, he is judged more for his emotional detachment than the actual crime he commits.

③ Response to Transformation and Existence

- Gregor's transformation into an insect can be seen as a metaphor for the alienation many people feel in a capitalist, utilitarian society. His response to his new form is one of confusion and frustration, and while he tries to adapt to his new circumstances, he struggles to maintain his identity and role within his family. His transformation symbolizes the dehumanizing effects of work and the loss of personal agency.

● Meursault's existential journey is marked by his indifference toward life's big questions. He does not seem to search for meaning in his existence. His reaction to his own mother's death, the absurdity of life, and even his killing of the Arab man is marked by a lack of emotional response or reflection.

● Meursault's realization of the absurdity of life comes with his confrontation with death. He is sentenced to death, and it is only in the final moments of the novel that he reflects on life and acknowledges the inevitability of death, yet he still seems detached from any deep spiritual or existential epiphany.

⚡ Conclusion:

While both Gregor Samsa and Meursault are alienated characters in their respective stories, the key difference lies in their conditions.

Elements of Absurdism in Meursault:

Meursault, the protagonist of Albert Camus, is an iconic character in the philosophy of absurdism. Absurdism refers to the confrontation between humanity's desire to find meaning and the inherent meaninglessness of the universe. In his philosophy, he argues that life is inherently absurd because we search meaning in a world that offers none. The absurd arises from the tension between our need for clarity and the indifferent, chaotic universe around us. In *The Outsider*, the protagonist, Meursault, exemplifies the core ideas of absurdism through his actions, attitudes and responses to the world.

Key elements of absurdism are following:

- 1) Indifference to Society's Norms

- and Expectations.
- 2) The Absurdity of Existence
 - 3) The Quest for Meaninglessness
 - 4) Reconciliation with the Absurd
 - 5) Isolation and Alienation

● Indifference to Society's Norms and Expectations:

One of the most striking elements of absurdism in Meursault is his emotional indifference and detachment from societal conventions. He does not adhere to the expected emotional reactions or behaviors dictated by society.

His reaction to his mother's death shows little emotion upon learning of his mother's death. Instead of expressing sadness or grief, he comments on the weather. His inability to mourn or feel the expected sense of loss highlights his emotional indifference.

Meursault has a relationship with Marie, but his feelings are primarily physical and immediate rather than emotional. He does not even feel remorse or guilt after having a sexual relationship with Marie the day after his mother's death.

● The Absurdity of Existence:

The absurd condition is that human beings are constantly seeking meaning in a world that does not provide it. Meursault embodies this philosophy. Meursault's actions such as shooting the Arab man on the beach appear completely random and devoid of any logical or moral justification. He himself says that he shot the man because of environment around him which was a trivial and irrational reason.

● The Quest for Meaninglessness:

In absurdism, there is no objective meaning to life, and

any attempt to find it is inherently futile.

Meursault rejects the notion that life has any inherent meaning. During his trial, he is questioned about his lack of remorse for killing the Arab man, and the prosecutor attempts to assign moral values to his actions by discussing his character. However, he is uninterested in providing a justification for his actions based on society's standards.

● Reconciliation with the absurd.

The culmination of his absurdist journey occurs at the end of the novel when he faces his death. Meursault has an epiphany that he can't escape the absurdity of life. He acknowledges that life is meaningless, that the universe is indifferent to human concerns and that human existence is fleeting and inconsequential.

● Isolation and Alienation:

Meursault's alienation is evident throughout the novel. He is emotionally distant from almost everyone in the story, from his mother to his lover Marie. He does not seem to be affected by the emotions of others and does not understand or connect them on a deep level.

He is disconnected from society, and his actions are motivated only by desires, not only by any desire to conform to societal expectations.