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The Role of the Family Unit in Dealing with Change in Kafka's "The Metamorphosis"

A strict analysis of Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" yields an interesting story of a family, and their struggles dealing with Gregor's transformation into a cockroach. Specifically, the Samsa family has to make a choice in between Gregor, who is proving to be quite the burden on the family, and themselves. As a result of the transformation into a bug, Gregor is subjected to the abuses of isolation from the family unit because he has now become an burden on the family rather than a bread winner, which the family and others looks poorly upon. I will explore the struggle of Gregor's sister Grete in order to highlight Gregor's complete transition into isolation, and later suicide. This raises the issue regarding the importance of interaction within the context of this novella. Isolation from one's family unit has the potential to be extremely damaging to ones health.

Gregor's sister, Grete, undergoes a transformation herself, her perspective of her brother and role in the family changes. Grete, from her well-being nature of going through the effort of bringing him different food to find what he would like. Even Gregor was surprised by this, exclaiming that "never would he have been able to guess what in the goodness of her heart his sister did" (Kafka 109). "[n]o longer bothering to think what might please Gregor, his sister [...] now hurriedly shoved some food or other into Gregor's room with her foot" (130). We can also look at her attitude discussing Gregor with the rest of the family. the remark relating to his food consumption as "[having] a good appetite today" or "hardly been touched today" (111, 111). Discussing the remainder of the characters in the family as well will prove useful.

Using Carol Cantrell's article "The "Metamorphosis": Kafka's Study of a Family," I will focus on the change in the family structure as a result of Gregor's transformation. His sense of duty is made clear right at the beginning of the book, Cantrell remarking that "his desire to sleep a little longer is an implicit threat to the rest of the family" (Cantrell 581). The analysis by Cantrell regarding Gregor's view of the family, and how Gregor becomes "free to think ill or even indifferently of his family" (585) because he is

dying.

With the use of Michael Rowe's "Metamorphosis: Defending the Human," I will focus on the relationships drawn with how Gregor's now bug state has changed his families view of him.

Works Cited

Cantrell, Carol H. "The "Metamorphosis": Kafka's Study of a Family." *Modern Fiction Studies* 23.4 (Winter 1977). Last updated - 2013-02-24: 578. Web.

This article focuses on the family structure that is changing within the novella. Their relationships are explored which yields an interesting contrast to my own interpretations of these happenings.

Kafka, Franz. "The Metamorphosis." *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories*. Trans. Michael Hofmann. Toronto: Penguin Books, 2007. 85–146. Print.

Rowe, Michael. "Metamorphosis: Defending the Human." *Literature and Medicine* 21.2 (2002): 264–280. Web.

This article focuses on the humanity aspect of Gregor, and the view that his family has of him as a result. This will be an focus point to compare his before and after the transformation that will become relevant when discussing the importance of the issue raised.