

In this interview, Max Brod, Franz Kafka's lifelong friend and literary executor, discusses his relationship with Kafka and offers insights into the author's life and work.

Here's a breakdown of the key topics:

- **First Meeting with Kafka** : Brod recounts meeting Kafka in college during a debate about Schopenhauer. Kafka approached Brod afterward, and they walked home together, beginning their long friendship.
- **Kafka's Appearance and Personality** : Brod describes Kafka as a slender, tall student with "flashing gray eyes and a black mop of thick hair." He emphasizes Kafka's elegant appearance and gentle demeanor. Brod notes that while Kafka wasn't a "jolly person," he was witty and lively in small groups but became silent in large gatherings.
- **Conflict with his Father** : Brod discusses the pervasive conflict between Kafka and his father, calling it a "mastering conflict" in Kafka's life. He explains that Kafka's father, a self-made man, wanted Kafka to become a businessman, which Kafka had no interest in or aptitude for. Brod believes Kafka deeply respected his father's competence and vitality despite their disagreements.
- **Kafka's Friends and Support System** : Brod highlights the importance of Kafka's close circle of friends, including himself, the philosopher Felix Weltsch, and the blind poet Oskar Baum. He describes their unique bond of trust and open criticism, where Kafka found relaxation and was often persuaded to read from his works.
- **Kafka's Prophetic Vision**: Brod addresses the idea of interpreting Kafka as a prophet, stating that while many things are "read into" Kafka's work, his prophetic tendencies are not an interpretation but an inherent quality. He mentions scenes in *The Trial* and passages in Kafka's diaries written before the wars that eerily foreshadow future events like deportations.
- **Brod's Role as Executor and Kafka's Intentions**: Brod, as Kafka's executor, discusses the criticism he faced for not burning Kafka's works as per the author's instructions. He clarifies that Kafka's request was on a casual note, not a formal testament, and that Kafka himself experienced periods of self-doubt about his mission as a writer.
- **The "Century of Kafka"**: Brod reflects on a young man who proclaimed that the 20th century would be called the "century of Kafka." Brod agrees with this sentiment, particularly regarding how German-speaking youth understand Kafka's boundless love for truth, seeing him as a guide. He concludes that Kafka was a great moralist, and his significance lies in his ethical teachings: "Be true and natural and ethical."