

**STUDY QUESTIONS**  
**FRANZ KAFKA (1883-1924)    *THE METAMORPHOSIS* (1912)**  
**German-Jewish writer from Czechoslovakia -- Modern Existentialist Thinker**

1.     What autobiographical elements are contained in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*?
  
2.     What is Gregor Samsa's "identity crisis"?
  
3.     Discuss the theme of "isolation" in *Metamorphosis*.
  
4.     How does *The Metamorphosis* illustrate the following maxim: "The more you do for someone, the more that someone takes you for granted."
  
5.     What is the source of Gregor Samsa's condemnation to a life as an insect or bug (vermin)?
  
6.     What mistaken beliefs does Gregor hold concerning his family?
  
7.     Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis goes hand in hand with a description of the world around him as he sees it in his new state. Give some specific illustrations of this.
  
8.     What is the relationship between Gregor and his family? What clues in the story suggest that his relationship with his family, particularly his father, is unsatisfactory?
  
9.     Discuss the central events in each of the three sections of the story. In what ways do these events suggest that the weakening of Gregor results in the strengthening of the family as a whole?

10. What is the significance of the minor characters in the story—the manager, the three boarders, and the cleaning women?
11. What is the importance of the final scene in the story, the family's trip to the country? Why is it written so lyrically in comparison to the rest of the text which is presented in more of an "objective" journalistic style?
12. How does the apparent disjunction between tone and event create humor in *The Metamorphosis*?
13. What significance is attached to food in *The Metamorphosis*?
14. *The Metamorphosis* has been read and interpreted in many ways—as an example of existentialist philosophy, a depiction of man's condition in the modern world, a presentation of psychological neurosis, and as a theological parable. Discuss these various interpretive possibilities.
15. Expressionism was an aesthetic movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It focused on distorting and magnifying the shape of reality in order to express a higher order of emotional reality beneath the surface. It assumes, like many of the major movements of modern art and literature, that art based predominately on visible reality is inadequate. German Expressionism's features include the following: the distortion of surfaces; the obsession with the inner life; and the relationship between the individual and authority (especially the conflict between fathers and sons). How is Kafka's *Metamorphosis* similar to Expressionism?

