

# Isolation in The Metamorphosis by Kafka and Heart of Darkness by Conrad

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It is said that no man is an island, and no man stands alone. Hence, true human existence can not prevail positively or productively without the dynamics of society. Yet, this concept is very much a double-edged sword . Just as much as man needs to exist in society and needs the support and sense of belonging, too much social pressures can also become a stifling cocoon of fantasies and stereotypes that surround him. He becomes confined to the prototype of who or what he is expected to be. Thus, because society is often blinded by the realms of the world, its impositions in turn cripples humanity. If he does not conform, he becomes a social out cast, excluded and excommunicated from the fabric of [life](#). The theme alienation in a small society is depicted primarily through setting by both authors Conrad and Kafka in *Metamorphosis* and *Heart of Darkness*. This depiction demonstrates how this isolation has a negative impact on the individual and ultimately leads to his destruction and decadence.

As illustrated in *Metamorphosis*, Kafka demonstrates the isolation of Gregor, the protagonist through the medium of his room. The “room” symbolizes how Gregor lacks relationship with his surroundings, his family and others. Kafka describes it as being “ A

regular human room ...” with “the four familiar walls”(3). This is society’s standards. It is portrayed as being full of ones basic essentials; with the regular old furniture. However, as the novel continues, Gregor’s life continues to change. His room is transformed to his new life and essentials. He begins to lose all his furniture, that “he had been use to [for] so long”(33). As a result there is a sense of emptiness and hollowness which is reflective of his surroundings and within himself. ...

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... authors conclude that it is through alienation within a small society that ultimately leads to the primary characters’ demise and death. Whether their individual cases are self imposed or externally imposed, the results and the impact are the same, annihilation of the human soul. Their craft make emphatic use of setting to the successful depiction of this theme. Both characters ultimately fall into the abyss of loneliness and despair proving that human [existence](#) cut-off and on its own is more destructive than positive . Thus their message seems to suggest that as humans, we need society in order to truly belong and have a connection, purpose and worth in this life, in order to truly live.

#### Works Cited

Conrad, Joseph. Heart of Darkness. New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2003.

Kafka, Franz. [The Metamorphosis](#). Trans. Stanley Corngold. New York: Bantam, 1972.

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