

Examining The Metamorphosis From a Marxist Perspective

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One of the saddest aspects of Franz Kafka's novella, *The Metamorphosis*, concerns the fact that young Gregor Samsa genuinely cares about his family, working hard to support them, even though they do little for themselves. On the surface, Kafka's 1916 novella, seems to be just a tale of Gregor morphing into a cockroach, but a closer reading with Marx and Engels' economic theories, unveils an impressive metaphor that gives the improbable story a great deal of relevance to the structure of Marxist society. Gregor, the protagonist, denotes the proletariat, or the working class, and his unnamed manager represents the bourgeoisie. The conflict, that arises between the two after Gregor's metamorphosis, contributes to his inability to work. This expresses the impersonal and dehumanizing structure of class relations. Kafka's prose emphasizes the economic effects on human relationships, therefore, by analyzing the images of Gregor, we can gain insight into many of the ideas the writer is trying to convey.

Within the first few pages of the novella readers promptly discover the proletariat in the story. Laboring as a traveling salesman, Gregor tries to support his family and pay off his father's debt due to a failed business venture. While lying in bed, he comments on his life

as a traveling sales man “Day in, day out-- on the road...I've got the torture of traveling worrying about changing trains, eating miserable food, at all hours...”(Kafka 4). The words he chooses to describe his job, “torture”, “worrying,” “miserable” dramatically show his discontent with his daily labor. Having no option other than to continue working at his monotonous job, because he is a member of the class wage laborers. They have no means of creating ...

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...ally becomes so meager he starves to death. Upon hearing the news of Gregor's death, the family does not show sadness, but instead, relief. "Well... now we can thank God!" (Kafka 55). Gregor's father felt relief from the economic burden of supporting his son. Even though the exact story told in Kafka's [The Metamorphosis](#) could not occur outside the domain of fantasy, it represents the real course of events of a worker being abandoned by his employer and family, after becoming unable to work and support them financially. Examining the novella from a Marxist perspective, the underlying theme of the story shows a conflict between proletariat and bourgeoisie. Economics replace everything else in a capitalistic society, a citizen who is unable to labor and earn wages is quickly abandoned. The result of this abandonment is often, as it was in Gregor Samsa's case, death.

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