**METAMORPHOSIS Questions for Discussion**

1. Describe the effect of Kafka’s matter-of-fact assertion of the bizarre incident

with which the story begins. Are you very interested in how it came to pass?

How does Kafka keep that from becoming an issue in the story?

2. What are Gregor’s concerns in section I? To what degree do they differ from

what would matter to him if he had not been transformed into an insect?

3. When Gregor is trying to get out of bed, he considers calling for help but then

dismisses the idea. Why?

4. What seems most important to the members of Gregor’s family as he lies in

bed? his health?

5. Describe the reaction of Gregor’s parents to their first view of the metamorphosed

Gregor. What circumstances in ordinary life might elicit a similar

response?

6. Discuss the view from Gregor’s window.

7. Trace Gregor’s adaptation to his new body. In what ways do the satisfactions of

his life as an insect differ from the satisfactions of his life as a traveling salesman?

8. When Gregor’s father pushes him back into his room at the end of section I,

Kafka calls it “truly his salvation.” Comment on the possible implications of that

description.

9. Describe Grete’s treatment of Gregor in section II. Is Gregor ill?

10. What are Gregor’s hopes for the future? Is there anything wrong with those

hopes?

11. For a time, Gregor is ashamed of his condition and tries to hide from everyone.

In what way might this be called a step forward for him?

12. Discuss the conflicting feelings Gregor has about the furniture’s being taken out

of his room.Why does he try to save the picture?What might Kafka’s intention

be in stressing that it is on this occasion that Grete calls Gregor by his name for

the first time since his metamorphosis?

13. “Gregor’s broken out.” What does Gregor’s father do? Why? Explain the situation

that has developed by the end of section II.

14. How does the charwoman relate to Gregor? Why is she the one who presides

over his “funeral”?

15. Compare the role of the lodgers in the family with that of Gregor. Have they

supplanted him? Why does Gregor’s father send them away in the morning?

16. Why does Gregor, who previously did not like music, feel so attracted to his sister’s

playing? What change has taken place in his attitude toward himself? What

might Kafka mean by “the unknown nourishment he longed for”?

17. Comment on Grete’s use of the neuter pronoun “it” to refer to Gregor.

18. What is the mood of the final passages of the story?

**Topics for Writing**

1. Write an essay describing how Kafka gains the reader’s “willing suspension of

disbelief.”

2. Consider Gregor Samsa’s metamorphosis as a triumph of the self.

3. Analyze Kafka’s “The Metamorphosis” as a study of sublimated incest.

4. RESPONDING CREATIVELY Consider Kafka’s use of apparently symbolic

images whose complete meaning seems impossible to state in abstract terms —

the apples, the fur muff, or the hospital beyond the window, for example.Write

a vignette in which symbolic objects play a role without becoming counters in

a paraphrasable allegory. Some examples of symbols: a candle, a cup, the sea,

broken glass, ants.

5. CONNECTIONS Compare and discuss Tolstoy’s “The Death of Ivan Ilych”

and Kafka’s “The Metamorphosis” as two studies of dying.