

# **Stories of Franz Kafka Book Notes**

## **Stories of Franz Kafka by Franz Kafka**

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# Author/Context

## Franz Kafka (1883-1924)

Franz Kafka was born in Prague, Bohemia on July 3, 1883 to middle class Jewish parents. As the son of an overbearing shopkeeper, Franz felt constantly inadequate and alienated from his family, themes that would later appear in his work. He constantly lived to seek approval from his father, who owned a haberdashery shop, and perpetually offered obstacles in young Franz's life - in terms of careers and relationships. In 1908, Kafka graduated from the renowned German High School in Prague with a degree in Law, a field which would guarantee him more financial security than previously thought. Yet despite his impending legal career, literature always remained in his heart, and he found a perfect writing niche with other German voices such as Franz Werfel, Martin Buber, and Max Brod.

During his prosperous youth, Franz Kafka was never known as a writer. He did, however, produce a substantial body of literature that will forever remain some of the most influential writing of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Such works include: *Meditation*, *The Judgment*, *The Trial*, *The Castle*, *Amerika*, *The Metamorphosis*, *Penal Colony*, *The Country Doctor*, and *A Fasting-artist*. Most of his novellas and short stories consist of the perpetual themes of solidarity and isolation.

*The Metamorphosis* remains Kafka's most well-known work, studied in high schools and universities across the United States and Europe. It is a harrowing study at human psychology and isolation within a family, society, and one's self.

Kafka died in 1924 at the early age of forty-one after suffering from Tuberculosis for nearly eight years. He contracted the disease in 1917 and was forced to retire from his work in 1922, passing his time from sanatoriums to health resorts. He entrusted his close friend Max Brod with his writings before his death with the promise that he would destroy them. Fortunately Brod denied Kafka his final wish and gave the world the immortal gift of his voice.

## Bibliography

Kafka, Franz. Trans. Malcolm Pasley. *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories*. Penguin Books, New York: 2000.

Kafka, Franz. Trans. Stanley Corngold. *The Metamorphosis*. Bantam Books, New York: 1972.



# Plot Summary

## The Metamorphosis

The novella opens when Gregor Samsa, a hardworking young man living at home, wakes up into the body of a giant bug. (Although the species is never named, Gregor is described as a cockroach and a beetle.) He lay awake in hid bed struggling to decipher a way out of his predicament, for he has lived his life every day in order to pay back his parents and support his entire family on the salary of a traveling salesman. He has no social life, as he is constantly traveling from town to town working. As Gregor has missed the 7:00am train, his manager arrives at the Samsa home to check up on him and to make sure he has not escaped with a large sum of company money. When Gregor hears his manager's voice, he struggles to life his large body and numerous legs out of bed and opens the door into a new world.

The Samsa family stares at Gregor in terror and fear, not understanding what has befallen their beloved son and brother. The manager escapes in fear as Mr. Samsa forces Gregor back into his room. As the family habituates to Gregor's new state, so does he. He learns how to move around, how to stay still when nobody is around, and how to eat. He realizes that his injuries heal more quickly than as a human, but that his mobility is more difficult. He can climb ceilings, but he leaves dark marks behind. He can hide under the couch, but his body sticks out the sides. Nobody wants to spend any time with or near him and everyone has a different idea of what is best for him.

Immediately after the metamorphosis, the maid quits her post with the Samsa family, rushing out of the crazy world. Gregor's mother, Anna, who suffers from sever asthma, is left to do all the housework with his sister, Grete, who has always known the easy life. She plays violin and had planned on attended the Conservatory via Gregor's financial efforts. Unfortunately, those dreams are over. All three remaining family members are forced to take on extra work and spend their time doing their extra duties.

Grete and Anna argue over whether or not to remove the furniture from Gregor's room so that he may move around more easily. They compromise over the desk, and leave it as is, so that when Gregor returns to his normal self, his possessions will still be in tact. Hurt by his family's decision to take away everything that he owns, Gregor comes out of his room. Unfortunately, he exits at the same point that Mr. Samsa returns home. Engulfed with rage, Mr. Samsa hurls apples at Gregor, injuring him permanently. One of the apple pieces is thrust into his back and nobody is courageous enough to remove it. Gregor is forced back into his room, alone, with the apple rotting in his body.

The Samsa family is still in financial strain, as Gregor has lived longer than expected in his transformed physical state. They are forced to take in three roomers who pay money in exchange for room and board. Grete and Anna cook for them, while they eat in the Samsa kitchen and relax in the Samsa dining room. One day, Grete pulls out her violin and plays soothing music from inside the kitchen. Initially, the roomers are intrigued and ask her to come closer to them so that they may follow along with the music and hear



her more clearly. Upon closer examination, they feel she is a talentless girl with no future and grow tired. Gregor, however, is entranced by his sister's music and follows the sounds to the living room. Unbeknownst to the roomers, Gregor walks into the room, wondering how if he is animal, how he can be so moved by music. When one of the roomers sees Gregor in his presence, he erupts, claiming he will not pay Mr. Samsa a single cent for rent and plans to move out immediately. The other two follow in his lead.

Later that evening, Grete calls her parents together to discuss Gregor's doom. She believes he is no longer her brother and is simply an animal who is causing the family horrible pain and strife. She wants to rid their life of him. Mr. Samsa agrees, while Mrs. Samsa weeps. Gregor overhears this conversation and stays up the entire night looking outside his window. The following morning, the new housekeeper enters his room and finds him dead.

After the housekeeper alerts the family that she has taken care of the mess and disposed of Gregor's body, the Samsa family decides to leave the apartment. They ponder moving into a smaller home and selecting furniture that they desire, instead of those purchased by Gregor. When Grete stands, however, her parents notice a blossoming young body, and wonder if she will be the next prosperous child.

### **A Fasting-artist - Four Stories**

In a series of four short stories, several characters are developed pertaining to solitude and social class. The first story is about a trapeze artist who struggles with his daily life atop the world. Although he has few friends and little social contact, he fears little in the world and seems content. The only problem he finds in his schedule is the constant traveling. Consequently, his manager does everything possible to alleviate all pain and organizes more peaceful travels. However, the trapeze artist begs his manager to place a second trapeze in the act, for he cannot admit to his constant fear of falling. He claims that two trapezes are always better than one when a single person is in the air. The manager agrees and notices a furrow in his trapeze artist's sleeping brow.

The second story discusses a little woman who lives in perpetual frustration with the narrator. Every move he makes, every comment he utters, every thought he thinks seems to drive this little woman mad, until her appearance, work, and relationships are affected by it. He cannot understand such frustrations, for he does not know this woman in any intimate setting. He has never had a conversation, let alone relationship with her. And although he wonders if even death would help her peace of mind, he knows that nothing can. They both remain trapped in their lives and their bodies, frustrated with the other and the situation.

The third story holds the title for the collection and discusses a fasting artist's (or hunger artist) decline in society. While at one point, his work was revered and watched, it has changed into a dreadful life of a circus freak. In his prime, the starving artist was on display and watched by managers to make sure he never ate, tallied his days of fasting, and completed the fast in a grand spectacle in front of hundreds of people. Decades later, people do not care about the starving artist and have removed him to the



placement of a cage in a circus. He claims he starves because he must; he has never been able to find nourishment that satisfies him. Eventually, the cage seems empty and the overseer finds the starving artist's dead body at the bottom. After burying him, the circus places a panther in his place.

The final story describes the mouse people and their beloved songstress Josephine. A female of infinite talent (to them), Josephine provides the piping music for all the mice to hear. Some feel she is their prized possession and must protect her, while others are frustrated with her lack of work and prima dona mentality. Eventually, Josephine disappears, unknown to any other soul. The mouse people continue on with their daily lives as if nothing has changed at all.



## Major Characters

**Gregor Samsa:** Gregor Samsa is a young traveling salesman living at home, supporting his parents and sister. One morning he awakens in an altered physical state: he is in the body of a large bug (cockroach, beetle). He wonders what will become of himself, his family, and his job, as he struggles to survive in his new body. As time progresses, he learns how to move, eat, and keep to himself. His family grows progressively afraid of him, locking him in his room, hurling objects at him, and painstakingly removing all objects from his room. As he continues to live as this creature, he becomes more alienated from the real world and his family, and eventually realizes that his is only a burden on his family. His sister, while once the one voice of sympathy and caring, has turned against him. After brining his family into financial disaster, the house into dirt and overpopulation, Gregor finally dies in his room...as the bug into which he had transformed.

**Mr. Samsa:** Mr. Samsa is Gregor's father and the fallback keeper of the house. Because Gregor works, he has been able to live a splendid, relaxed life without worry. After Gregor's metamorphosis, he must run the family on the money he saved over the years. Nonetheless, he eventually takes a job to make money with the rest of the family. Mr. Samsa hurls an apple at Gregor, leaving an injury that plagues him for the rest of his animal life. Ultimately, it is Mr. Samsa who feels the most distant from Gregor and knows not what to do with him. He accedes quickly to Grete's desires to rid the family of the creature that they believe is no longer Gregor.

**Mrs. Anna Samsa:** Anna Samsa is Gregor's mother, a kind woman who suffers from severe asthma. She genuinely cares for Gregor, despite her constant fear of his body and its traces. She faints upon seeing her husband throw fruit at Gregor and tries to stop the violence from continuing. However, when she sees the marks left on the walls by Gregor, she becomes equally upset. At the end of the novel, she has difficulty dealing with her son's death. Yet, like the rest of the family, she quickly moves on to focus on Grete's new blossoming body.

**Grete Samsa:** Grete Samsa is Gregor's younger seventeen-year-old sister, whom he desperately loves. She plays the violin and has hopes of eventually attending the conservatory. She initially cares for Gregor and visits him to feed him inside his room. It is because of Grete's own sanity that Gregor decides to cover himself with a sheet when people see him. However, when Grete plays the violin at the end of the novel, it is her music that lures Gregor out of his room. Gregor wants people to see that he still loves people and music; unlike a true animal. Ultimately, Grete is the voice of action to rid the family of the creature that is Gregor. She believes that Gregor no longer exists and that the creature lives in the house with them to torture and frustrate them. After Gregor's death, the family realizes that Grete is growing into a beautiful, voluptuous young woman, and is now of age to find a suitable husband.

**The Trapeze Artist:** The trapeze artist is a man of infinite skill and persistent fear and trepidation. Although he makes a living by daring to swing hundreds of feet in the air



above spectators, he secretly has trouble traveling and swinging alone. He has few friends, as he spends most of his time in his trapeze, and desperately wants a second trapeze in his act. Although nobody can see it, his life is plagued by fear – evident in his furrowing brow.

**The Manager:** The trapeze artist's manager loves his client and his work, and will do anything to help him. He tries to make the artist's life easier by arranging comfortable living and traveling conditions, and eventually promises a second trapeze for the act. He also notices the first sign of fear and anxiety within the trapeze the artist: a furrow in his brow.

**The Narrator:** The narrator is a man who cannot understand why the little woman hates him so. His every motion, utterance, and breathe seem to cause her infinite strife, and he is confused, for he feels as if he is strangers with this woman. He continues his life as best he can, keeping such an uncomfortable manner as covert as possible.

**The Little Woman:** The little woman never speaks in the story, but lives her life in constant terror and annoyance with the narrator. Although they are strangers, she cannot stand his every movement, being, breath, speech. She hates him and is frustrated by everything that he does. This frustration spreads into her appearance.

**The Fasting-artist:** The fasting-artist is a man of pure work and honest ethics whose job and passion it is to starve in a spectacle for forty days. However, his glory days are over, and people no longer care to look at him in his cage and see him take his first bite. He has been reduced to living inside a cage at a circus, where nobody knows of his honor, rewards, and honesty, and eventually dies as another piece of excess junk passed by.

**Josephine:** Josephine is an extraordinary mouse, who by the blessed nature of God, is given an extreme talent of singing. Her voice soothes the mouse people, and in turn, they see her as a special member who they must protect and worship. Some do not like her music and do not listen to it, while others, are frustrated by her lack of work in the community. She eventually vanishes from the mouse people, leaving them without music, and quickly forgotten.

## Minor Characters

**Gregor's Manager:** Gregor's manager is the first visitor at the Samsa household who sees Gregor's metamorphosis. He shrieks in terror at the sight of Gregor's new body and races away to inform the company of Gregor's new state.

**Gregor's Boss:** Gregor's boss sends the manager to the Samsa home to check up on Gregor. It is because of him that Gregor's job is on the line, for he fears that Gregor may abscond with the company money, currently in his possession.



**The Maid:** The maid works with the Samsa family at the start of the novella and requests leave upon discovery of Gregor's new physical state. They kindly allow her to leave.

**A cleaning woman:** Towards the end of the novella, the Samsa family hires a cleaning lady to come and sporadically clean up after Gregor and the three roomers. She is inconsiderate, loud, and bombastic, and is the first person to discover Gregor's dead corpse lying on the floor of his room.

**The Three Borders (Roomers):** The three borders live in the Samsa household towards the end of the novella as a means of income for the Gregor's family. They are three older men with long beards and an elitist attitude about music. When one of them discovers Gregor's body, he immediately announces plans to leave and possibly file a complaint against Mr. Samsa. The others quickly join him. When Gregor dies, Mr. Samsa immediately asks them to leave.



## Objects/Places

**Gregor's room:** Gregor's room is the place in which he awakens as the insect and also where he dies. It becomes his prison, a place in which he is locked, a place in which his furniture is removed, and eventually a place in which everything extraneous is stored.

**The desk:** The desk in Gregor's room is the one piece of furniture that the family has difficulty removing. It eventually becomes the only piece that remains in his room after Anna and Grete remove the rest of it so that he may climb and enjoy himself at will.

**The train:** The train is the opening signal at the start of the novella that reminds Gregor that he is late to work. Each sequential train, following the 7:00am departure, continues to leave the station without him, causing Gregor's manager to visit the Samsa home.

**The couch:** Gregor finds comfort and disguise under the couch in the living room. He sleeps under it and sometimes squeezes out of it. When bloated, he expands under the couch, allowing anyone who wants to see his body.

**The bowl:** Grete feeds Gregor all types of food in one bowl that becomes designated for him. Both milk and fruit and bread is placed in it. Gregor does not care to eat out of it and Grete does not like to touch it openly.

**Grete's Violin:** Grete's violin is her main source of joy and Gregor's pride. He had planned to announce his hope to send her to the conservatory at Christmastime. Now, Grete plays her violin at her discretion. She plays music one evening for the borders, and the music lures Gregor from inside the prison of his room to the living room, where he is discovered by the three men.

**Picture of Woman in Fur:** Gregor notices this picture on his wall when he wakes up and never lets it out of his possession. For some reason, he wants to hold onto that dream, that hope of humanity, and sees it in this woman.

**The apple:** Mr. Samsa hurls apples at Gregor towards the middle of the novel. One piece of an apple gets stuck in Gregor's back and remains there until his death. The family is too frightened and repulsed to touch Gregor and take it out. The area around it becomes swollen and infected, causing Gregor much pain.

**The trapeze:** The trapeze artist spends most of his time atop his trapeze. He feels happy and fulfilled atop the world while performing and relaxing. And, although he loves what he does, he desperately desires a second trapeze to combine with the first in his act, for safety and security.

**The Cage:** The starving-artist lives within his cage – his home – for the duration of the story. He starves inside it during his glory days, and it eventually changes to a humorous spectacle at the circus. Towards the end of his life, he is even lost within it,

unknownst to passers-by and overseers. When he dies, a panther is placed in the same cage that housed his art, his work, and his glorious starvation.



# Quotes

## The Metamorphosis - Chapter 1

Quote 1: "When Gregor Samsa woke up one morning from unsettling dreams, he found himself changed in his bed into a monstrous vermin. He was lying on his back as hard as armor plate, and when he lifted his head a little, he saw his vaulted brown belly, sectioned by arch-shaped ribs, to whose dome the cover, about to slide off completely, could barely cling. His many legs, pitifully thin compared with the size of the rest of him, were waving helplessly before his eyes." The Metamorphosis, Chapter 1, pg. 3

Quote 2: "Why was only Gregor condemned to work for a firm where at the slightest omission they immediately suspected the worst? Were all employees louts without exception, wasn't there a single loyal, dedicated worker among them who, when he had not fully utilized a few hours of the morning for the firm, was driven half-mad by pangs of conscience and was actually unable to get out of bed?" The Metamorphosis, Chapter 1, pg. 9

Quote 3: "And now he could see him, standing closest to the door, his hand pressed over his open mouth, slowly backing away, as if repulsed by an invisible, unrelenting force. His mother - in spite of the manager's presence she stood with her hair still unbraided from the night, sticking out in all directions - first looked at his father with her hands clasped, then took two steps towards Gregor, and sank down in the midst of her skirt spreading out around her, her face completely hidden on her breast. With a hostile expression his father clenched his fist, as if to drive Gregor back into his room, then looked uncertainly around the living room, shielded his eyes with his hands, and sobbed with heaves of his powerful chest." The Metamorphosis, Chapter 1, pg. 15

## The Metamorphosis - Chapter 2

Quote 4: "Those had been wonderful times, and they had never returned, at least not with the same glory, although later on Gregor earned enough money to meet the expenses of the entire family and actually did so. They had just gotten used to it, the family as well as Gregor, the money was received with thanks and given with pleasure." The Metamorphosis, Chapter 2, pg. 27

Quote 5: "Hardly she entered the room than she would run straight to the window without taking time to close the door - though she was usually so careful to spare everyone the sight of Gregor's room - then tear open the casements with eager hands, almost as if she were suffocating, and remain for a little while at the window even in the coldest weather, breathing deeply. With this racing and crashing, she frightened Gregor twice a day; the whole time he cowered under the couch, and yet he knew very well that she would certainly have spared him this if only she had found it possible to stand being in a room with him with the window closed." The Metamorphosis, Chapter 2, pg. 30



Quote 6: "Into a room in which Gregor ruled the bare walls all alone, no human being beside Grete was ever likely to set foot." *The Metamorphosis*, Chapter 2, pg. 34

### **The Metamorphosis - Chapter 3**

Quote 7: "Gregor's serious wound, from which he suffered for over a month - the apple remained imbedded in his flesh as a visible souvenir since no one dared to remove it - seemed to have reminded even his father that Gregor was a member of the family, in spite of his present pathetic and repulsive shape, who could not be treated as an enemy; that on the contrary, it was the commandment of family duty to swallow their disgust and endure him, endure him and nothing more." *The Metamorphosis*, Chapter 3, pg. 40

Quote 8: "What the world demands of poor people they did to the utmost of their ability; his father brought breakfast for the minor officials at the bank, his mother sacrificed herself to the underwear of strangers, his sister ran back and forth behind the counter at the request of the customers; but for anything more than this they did not have the strength." *The Metamorphosis*, Chapter 3, pg. 42

Quote 9: "I won't pronounce the name of my brother in front of this monster, and so all I say is: we have to try and get rid of it. We've done everything humanly possible to take care of it and to put up with it; I don't think anyone can blame us in the least." *The Metamorphosis*, Chapter 3, pg. 51

Quote 10: "Growing quieter and communicating almost unconsciously through glances, they thought that it would soon be time, too, to find her a good husband. And it was like a confirmation of their new dreams and good intentions when at the end of the ride their daughter got up first and stretched her young body." *The Metamorphosis*, Chapter 3, pg. 58

### **First Sorrow**

Quote 11: "A trapeze artist - this art, practiced high in the domes of the great variety theaters, is acknowledged to be one of the most difficult within men's reach - had arranged his life, at first simply out of perfectionism, but later also from the force of a habit which has grown tyrannical, in such a way that he remained, for the whole period of each engagement, day and night on his trapeze." *First Sorrow*, pg. 182

### **A Little Woman**

Quote 12: "Now this little woman is highly dissatisfied with me, she always has some fault to find with me, I am always doing her an injustice, I annoy her at every turn; if it were possible to divide up one's life into the smallest of its parts and judge each part separately, there is no doubt that she would find every smallest part of my own life offensive. I have often wondered why it is that I should offend her so; it may be that everything about me runs counter to her aesthetic feelings, her sense of justice, her habits, her traditions, her hopes - such mutually incompatible natures do exist, but why does this cause her so much pain?" *A Little Woman*, pg. 185



### **A Fasting-artist**

Quote 13: "Just try to explain to someone what the art of fasting is. No one who does not feel it can be made to grasp what it means. The beautiful placards became dirty and illegible, they were ripped down, no one thought of replacing them; the little board showing the tally of days fasted, which at first had been scrupulously changed each day, had now long stayed unaltered, for after the first few weeks the staff had grown weary of even this little task; and so the fasting-artist did indeed go fasting on, as he had once dreamed of doing, but no one counted the days, no one, not even the fasting-artist himself, knew how great his achievement was, and his hearty grew heavy. And once in a while some casual passer-by should stop, ridicule the outdated number of the board and talk about fraudulence, that in its way the stupidest lie that ever indifference and inborn malice could invent, for it was not the fasting-artist who was cheating, he was working honestly, but the world was cheating him out of his reward." A Fasting-artist, pp. 199-200

### **Josephine, the Songstress or: The Mouse People**

Quote 14: "Sometimes I have the impression that our people sees its relationship with Josephine rather like this: that she, this fragile, vulnerable, somehow distinguished creature, in her opinion distinguished by her song, has been entrusted to us and that we must look after her; the reason for this is not clear to anyone, only the fact seems to be established. But what has been entrusted to one's care one does not laugh at; to do so would be a breach of duty; the utmost spite that the most spiteful amongst us can vent on Josephine is when they sometimes say: 'When we see Josephine it is no laughing matter.'" Josephine, pg. 106-107

Quote 15: "So perhaps we shall not miss so very much after all, while Josephine, for her part, delivered from earthly afflictions, which however to her mind are the privilege of chosen spirits, will happily lose herself in the countless throng of the heroes of our people, and soon, since we pursue no history, be accorded the heightened deliverance of being forgotten along with all her brethren." Josephine, pg. 116



# Topic Tracking: Family

## The Metamorphosis - Chapter 1

Family 1: Although a grown man, Gregor Samsa still lives at home with his family. He works in order to provide for them and lives his life according to their rules. Everything he does is for his parents and sister.

Family 2: Gregor's family is worried about him, for they hear strange animal noises coming out of his room. His sister, Grete, cries aloud to her brother, hoping he is feeling better.

## The Metamorphosis - Chapter 2

Family 3: Gregor looks around at his apartment and realizes that he has been taking care of his family for so long. He finances the apartment and purchases all the furniture and food on which they live. He wonders what they will do without his income.

Family 4: Gregor thinks of the individual members in his family and how they will cope with a smaller income. He worries about his father who has not worked in years after putting on weight, his mother who suffers from severe asthma, and his little sister who loves to play the violin and wear pretty clothes. He thinks of their future, not his own, when contemplating the current crisis.

Family 5: Gregor's relationships change with individual family members. He notices his sister coming into his room and heading directly for the window so that she may breathe with ease. Although she tries desperately to mask her disgust, she still treats Gregor as an insect, not her brother. Despite this maltreatment, she is the one member who attempts to keep a relationship alive with Gregor.

Family 6: Gregor's family desperately struggles with this new change. His mother wants to see him and spend time with him, despite his father's orders. He works very hard placing a sheet over himself so that his family will not be repulsed by his appearance. At this point, he is still connected to his family on an emotional level, caught somewhere between man and bug.

Family 7: Gregor's family is extremely involved in his life at this point, as they see his trackings and remains all over the walls of the house. His mother is furious with him and faints when she sees him. When Gregor's father enters the house, he throws apples at him, injuring his back with an apple piece. The Samsa family has torn itself apart on behalf of Gregor. Mrs. Samsa faints, while trying desperately to keep her husband from hurting her "son," while Grete is confused about what to do this entire time.

## The Metamorphosis - Chapter 3



Family 8: Mr. and Mrs. Samsa beam with pride when they look at their daughter. She seems to have replaced Gregor in terms of prosperity and opportunity. They are so preoccupied with Grete, that they do not notice their other child coming in through the dining room.

Family 9: Although she had always been his greatest proponent, Grete becomes Gregor's first opponent. She announces her fears to her parents about their future. She believes that the creature is no longer her brother. The bug living in Gregor's room can no longer be considered part of the family and they must think of action to take.

Family 10: Although Gregor has breathed his final breath less than 24 hours earlier, Mr. and Mrs. Samsa already focus all their lucrative attention on their daughter. They look at Grete's blossoming bosom and begin to plan her future - of course, without her own consent and thoughts.

### **Josephine, the Songstress or: The Mouse People**

Family 11: Josephine the songstress is part of the mouse people family. They love her, protect her, and think she is vitally important to the community.



# Topic Tracking: Money

## The Metamorphosis - Chapter 1

Money 1: Gregor Samsa works hard as a traveling salesman in order to make plenty of money to support his family. He works long hours so that he can make extra money and cares little for other things. He only wants to make enough money to pay off the debts to the company that were incurred by his parents.

Money 2: Gregor is angry that his company has sent the manager to his home to check up on his tardiness. The manager informs the Samsa family that Gregor is in possession of much of the company's money. The only reason he has visited Gregor is because of the money and his fear that Gregor might steal it. Gregor is terrified because he needs this job in order to support his family. He is currently the only source of income for his family.

## The Metamorphosis - Chapter 2

Money 3: Gregor realizes that he alone has been supporting his family and wonders how they will find money to live without him. He has purchased and financed the apartment and all its compartments and fears they will be lost without his income.

Money 4: Mr. Samsa summarizes the family's financial predicament, now that Gregor is unable to work. He has saved enough money for the family to live on for at least two years; so, their situation is not as grave as it initially appeared. Gregor is thrilled to overhear such news.

## The Metamorphosis - Chapter 3

Money 5: All three remaining members of the Samsa family have found work outside the house in order to support themselves. The three jobs do not equal enough money, still, to sustain such a household. Nonetheless, they work constantly for their finances, leaving Gregor alone in his room.

Money 6: To supplement their income even more, the Samsa family takes in three boarders. These three men with long beards live in their house and eat in their dining room. The Samsas, in turn, cook for them and eat in the kitchen, leaving Gregor alone in his room, neglected and hungry.

Money 7: When the boarders see Gregor, they explode at Mr. Samsa, claiming they will not pay him a single cent for rent while they have lived in his house so close to such a creature. Money is the first cry they have when they think of their current predicament. They want a way out and they use finances as that means of escape.



# Topic Tracking: Solitude

## The Metamorphosis - Chapter 1

Solitude 1: Gregor claims that his lifestyle is conducive to solitude. He has no friends and socializes little. His family also cries that Gregor has little social life and should not be reprimanded, for he does his work and nothing else.

## The Metamorphosis - Chapter 2

Solitude 2: Gregor wanders his apartment alone in his thoughts and body. He only comes out of the room when he is alone and finds a comfortable resting space under the couch. His sister sees him there and leaves a bowl of food for him to eat...alone. This is the way he is nourished from that day on; eating alone from for the future.

Solitude 3: The family realizes that nobody can and should be left alone with Gregor. The maid requests her leave and exits immediately. They do not take Gregor's feelings into consideration when they make these rules, and he is thereupon left to a life of solitude.

Solitude 4: Grete and Anna argue over Gregor's room. Grete wants to take the furniture out so that they can move around more easily and have fun. They wonder if he will feel more alienated without his possessions. Gregor feels more distant and alone without his belongings, being treated less and less like a member of the family and more and more alone like a creature.

## The Metamorphosis - Chapter 3

Solitude 5: Gregor is devastated that his family has left him alone and helpless in his current state. They have all gone on to find new jobs and have left him to find food and activity for himself. His back still suffers from the apple haled at him by his father. The family has not even paid Gregor enough attention to remove it from his body.

## First Sorrow

Solitude 6: The trapeze artist spends his entire life atop of the world - both physically and emotionally. However, because of his lifestyle, he spends this time alone. He has little social contact and is isolated therefore in his thoughts and time.

## A Little Woman

Solitude 7: The Little Woman suffers in a world of her own. She is alone in her anger, fear, annoyance, and frustration with the narrator. No one seems to understand her suffering and her problems, consequently driving her to indescribable angst. The narrator, is also left in a solitude of sorts, confused at the actions of the little woman with nobody to understand his predicament.



### **A Fasting-artist**

Solitude 8: The fasting-artist spends his entire life alone behind bars of a cage. By choice, he lives life as a spectacle starving. After declining into a circus freak, the fasting-artist dies alone in his cage, unknown to the world.

### **Josephine, the Songstress or: The Mouse People**

Solitude 9: Josephine the songstress suffers her life in the mouse community, for she is alone in her talent and mindset. Because she sings for the rest of the mice, she is looked upon as different - for better or for worse. When she eventually disappears, people soon forget her.



# The Metamorphosis - Chapter 1

The novella opens as Gregor Samsa awakens one morning feeling quite unlike his normal self. A traveling salesman still living in his parents' home, Gregor passes time avoiding his boss, trying to earn enough money so that he can pay back his parents (which he claims will take up to five or six years), and painlessly avoiding intimate relationships, a side effect he claims comes with his profession.

Topic Tracking: Family 1

Topic Tracking: Money 1

However, this morning is different, for he has awoken into the body of a large bug.

*"When Gregor Samsa woke up one morning from unsettling dreams, he found himself changed in his bed into a monstrous vermin. He was lying on his back as hard as armor plate, and when he lifted his head a little, he saw his vaulted brown belly, sectioned by arch-shaped ribs, to whose dome the cover, about to slide off completely, could barely cling. His many legs, pitifully thin compared with the size of the rest of him, were waving helplessly before his eyes."* The Metamorphosis, Chapter 1, pg. 3

Gregor is hopelessly tired, after getting up so early in the morning (normally at 4am, yet today at 6:30), thinking such an hour un-humanlike. He thinks of other traveling salesmen living glorious lives similar to those of harem women, and sadly remembers his own. He listens to the rain beating against the windowpane and observes the surroundings of his room, notably a picture of a beautiful woman dressed in fur. They are exactly as they were the day before. Gregor wonders if he will be able to make the 7:00 am train.

As he lay in bed awake struggling to decipher a method out of it, he realizes that he must think hard, for he simply cannot stay in bed all day useless. He worries that if he drifts away, he may lose consciousness. A short while later, Gregor realizes that it is already 7:00 and he has missed the train. He attempts to lift himself out of bed, but has difficulty. His numerous little legs are difficult to control, and consequently stretch his body out when moved. He attempts to get out of bed with his bottom half and finds disaster and pain. He discovers that his top half will be less sensitive and therefore the most useful means of mobility. He thinks how easy movement would be if only he had some help: two people like his father and the maid. Meanwhile, Gregor's sister and father beat on his bedroom door, calling him to leave for work. Gregor muffles his voice and proudly manages to send them away.

At a quarter past seven, the doorbell rings. Gregor prays that nobody answers it. Unfortunately, the maid is trained in her duties and quickly answers the door. Upon hearing one word out of the visitor, Gregor realizes that it is his manager and is furious that his company has sent the highest-ranking officer to make a house call on the only day he has ever been late to work. "Why was only Gregor condemned to work for a firm where at the slightest omission they immediately suspected the worst? Were all



employees louts without exception, wasn't there a single loyal, dedicated worker among them who, when he had not fully utilized a few hours of the morning for the firm, was driven half-mad by pangs of conscience and was actually unable to get out of bed?" Chapter 1, pg. 9 With this thought, Gregor thrusts his full body out of bed and lands crashing on his elastic back with an enormous bang on the floor. The Samsa family hears the noise, worrying about Gregor.

As the moments pass, the anxious family begs Gregor to open the door. His sister begins to sob, while the manager utters threatening words. He informs Gregor that the boss has been worried about Gregor's position, but that he, the manager, has always supported Gregor's professional work ethic. Gregor is in possession of much cash for the company, and the manager now tells him that he hopes Gregor will not do anything stupid with it, for his job is far from secure. This information worries Gregor, for he vows never to let his family down. Their entire livelihood and happiness depend on his income.

Topic Tracking: Money 2

The family continues to beg him to open the door, while Gregor repeatedly answers all questions with a yes or a no. Gregor, fearing the loss of his job, finally responds to the manager, claiming that he has been sick all morning and is just now waking up out of his illness. He further claims that he can still make the 8:00 train and that there is no reason to suspect any foul play. After Gregor's words, his family erupts in fear and anxiety, wondering about the odd noises they hear from inside Gregor's room. His sister Grete and mother Anna believe his voice sounds like an animal and scream for a doctor, while the manager and his father beckon a locksmith to open the door. Forgetting his back pain, Gregor pulls himself up, finds the key, grasps it within his strong yet toothless jaws, and slowly opens the door. Everyone cheers him on. He does not even notice the injury he causes himself by doing so, ignorant of the white substance he emits that falls on the ground.

Topic Tracking: Family 2

When Gregor opens the door, he is initially hidden. However, upon first glance, the family curls in shock and fear:

*"And now he could see him, standing closest to the door, his hand pressed over his open mouth, slowly backing away, as if repulsed by an invisible, unrelenting force. His mother - in spite of the manager's presence she stood with her hair still unbraided from the night, sticking out in all directions - first looked at his father with her hands clasped, then took two steps towards Gregor, and sank down in the midst of her skirt spreading out around her, her face completely hidden on her breast. With a hostile expression his father clenched his fist, as if to drive Gregor back into his room, then looked uncertainly around the living room, shielded his eyes with his hands, and sobbed with heaves of his powerful chest."* The Metamorphosis, Chapter 1, pg. 15



Gregor proceeds to explain his professional - not physical - predicament to his manager, claiming that a traveling salesman is always the butt of jokes and question, and becomes an easy scapegoat for all problems, since he is out of the office everyday. However, all Gregor does is work. His family claims his works too much and socializes too little.

Topic Tracking: Solitude 1

The manager turns away in disgust, trying to leave the house by means of the foyer. Gregor realizes that he cannot let this man escape his house without leaving with him - with the samples - to go to work. He realizes that he cannot allow the manager to return to the firm with such horror stories, so he lunges at him, attempting to console and explain his current bizarre circumstances. The manager runs away in fear. Meanwhile, Gregor's father spots the manager's cane, and in a moment extreme trepidation and realization, lunges at Gregor, leading him back into his room. Gregor had never tried to walk backwards before, and finds such a task extremely trying. Nonetheless, his father pushes him back into the room, ultimately ramming him through the small space vertically. Bleeding and oozing, Gregor flies through the air and back into his room, with his family closing the door quickly behind him.



## The Metamorphosis - Chapter 2

Gregor awakens at dusk later that day, after sleeping deeply for so many hours. It is the pangs of hunger that bring his body to the door, where he finds a bowl of milk with bread floating in it. Although he hates milk, he makes every attempt to view this food as if it were manna from heaven, ultimately leaving it untouched. His entire body aches from the morning's excitement, especially his numerous legs; one of which is severely injured.

Gregor looks around at the apartment he so proudly finances for his parents and sister and wonders what will become of it, of them, and of his job.

Topic Tracking: Money 3

Topic Tracking: Family 3

In order to avoid such thoughts, he continues to crawl through the apartment, opening doors as he goes. He crawls under the couch, as to feel invisible and comfortable, and spends the remainder of the night there, wishing his sides did not stick out. In the morning, Grete walks into the room to find her brother sprawled out under the couch. After a long while, she finally realizes that Gregor has neither eaten his food nor drunk his milk. She leaves to retrieve more food and returns with an old piece of cheese, some bread and butter, water, raisins, and almonds. The bowl is now apparently an all purpose food bowl for Gregor alone. Famished, he devours the food, leaving only small portions untouched, and remains under the couch. He now wishes the couch were larger, for he is bloated and his stomach seems to be growing at a rapid pace. As Grete sweeps the remains of Gregor's meal with a broom and rag, Gregor notices how his injuries from the previous day have already healed. He feels no more pain and realizes that the animal state either has less sensitivity than the human state or a much quicker healing time. After cleaning the food, Gregor comes out from under the couch and puffs himself up to a normal size again. Gregor is fed this way twice a day from this point on.

Topic Tracking: Solitude 2

As Gregor habituates to his new status, so does his family. They have new rules set up on how to cope with the new situation. Nobody is to be left alone with Gregor. Furthermore, the maid begs Mr. Samsa to dismiss her immediately, which he does so willingly. With the maid gone, Anna and Grete are left to do the housework, cooking, and cleaning.

Topic Tracking: Solitude 3

Mr. Samsa summarizes the family's financial predicament, much to Gregor's surprise. Things seem to be in much better shape than he expected, he claims, since he has been imprisoned in his new body. They reminisce about the transformation of Gregor from a clerk to a successful traveling salesman, bringing home mountains of hard cash for the family's pleasure. "Those had been wonderful times, and they had never



returned, at least not with the same glory, although later on Gregor earned enough money to meet the expenses of the entire family and actually did so. They had just gotten used to it, the family as well as Gregor, the money was received with thanks and given with pleasure." *The Metamorphosis*, Chapter 2, pg. 27 Grete remained close with her brother, sharing her desires to study violin at the conservatory in town. Often Gregor would visit it during his traveling days as a salesman, and had always planned on announcing his plans to support this dream on Christmas Eve. Gregor listens at the door to his father speak about their current financial situation, with thoughts such as Grete's violin dreams plaguing his every thought. Unfortunately, they are no good to him in his present status, and so, Gregor continues to only listen. He is thrilled to learn that things are not as bad as he initially thought, for his father had planned wisely and saved enough of Gregor's earnings to last for at least a year or two.

Topic Tracking: Money 4

Gregor wonders what will happen to his family, for his father - in the last five years - has put on weight and become sluggish, now finally enjoying a vacation in his hard-working unsuccessful life. His mother suffers from severe asthma, rendering her helpless and oftentimes laying on her back gasping for breath. His sister is merely a seventeen-year-old girl who knows nothing in life but of pretty clothes and playing the violin. Gregor does not know what will become of his beloved family now that he is unable to work. He falls onto the couch in shame and grief contemplating such thoughts until the morning.

Topic Tracking: Family 4

Gregor's eyesight begins to wane, while his relationship with the family transforms. He wishes he could speak with his sister, to thank her for all she has done for him. Yet, each time she enters his room, he feels nothing but embarrassment and pain. "Hardly she entered the room than she would run straight to the window without taking time to close the door - though she was usually so careful to spare everyone the sight of Gregor's room - then tear open the casements with eager hands, almost as if she were suffocating, and remain for a little while at the window even in the coldest weather, breathing deeply. With this racing and crashing, she frightened Gregor twice a day; the whole time he cowered under the couch, and yet he knew very well that she would certainly have spared him this if only she had found it possible to stand being in a room with him with the window closed." *The Metamorphosis*, Chapter 2, pg. 30

Topic Tracking: Family 5

About a month after his metamorphosis, Gregor decides to make a slight change to help his sister. He takes a sheet and places it over himself when he hides under the couch, so that nobody will have to look at him and be repulsed. This setup takes Gregor four hours - to hide under the couch and then place the white sheet over it - and seems to work well for the time being. Grete smiles briefly of relief when she notices the change. For the first two weeks, Gregor's parents do not see him. After the time passes, Gregor's mother cries out to him, begging his father to allow her to see him. Gregor is



thrilled to see his mother, but hopes that she only helps out with his problems once a week instead of every day (like Grete).

Topic Tracking: Family 6

Gregor learns to use his body more easily, climbing on the walls and swinging from the ceiling. His tracks are left all over his room in sticky form. Because of his seeming enjoyment, Grete decided to remove all his furniture so that he can move around more easily and have fun climbing. Unfortunately, a small sixteen-year-old girl cannot move all the furniture alone. Anna does not agree with Grete, for she fears removing all his furniture will alienate him and make him feel as if the family has completely abandoned him. Furthermore, she harbors the hope that Gregor will return to his normal state soon enough and she believes the room should stay as is for that future time. Unfortunately, Anna Samsa insists upon keeping all furniture inside the room, despite Grete's perpetual urging. "Into a room in which Gregor ruled the bare walls all alone, no human being beside Grete was ever likely to set foot." *The Metamorphosis*, Chapter 2, pg. 34 Gregor's mother still does not believe in changing the room; however, if she believes it will help her son, she accedes to compromise. Together, Grete and Anna remove the chest of drawers from the room, yet leave the desk. Initially, Anna is shocked again by Gregor's repugnant appearance. When she eventually accustoms herself to it, the two women remove each piece of furniture slowly, causing harsh noises on the floor. Gregor is disoriented, hurt, and upset that they are taking away his entire life, his memories, his hard work. When the two are gone momentarily, he leaps onto the wall and grabs the picture with the woman in fur, holding onto it under his sticky stomach. He thinks that if Grete were to chase him up the wall to retrieve the picture, he would fly into her face.

Topic Tracking: Solitude 4

Gregor escapes from his room, climbing on the walls. When his mother sees the enormous brown blotch on the wall in the living room, she faints dramatically, causing Grete to remain with her to bring her back to consciousness. In the midst of the calamity, Mr. Samsa comes home, enraged to find Gregor outside of his prison-like room, his daughter discombobulated, and his wife passed out on the floor. He enters the house dressed in his bank attire, furious with Gregor. His pockets are full of fruit and he finds some more and hurls apples at Gregor. One of them hits him in the back, lodging itself in the brown mass that is Gregor's body. Upon hearing the racket, Grete and Anna rush out to stop the violence. Anna is in her underwear, as Grete undressed her trying to allow her body to breathe so that she may regain consciousness. Gregor sees everything, including his mother leaping on top of his father in order to prevent him from hurting Gregor any more.

Topic Tracking: Family 7



## The Metamorphosis - Chapter 3

Life in the Samsa house continues, despite the changes in everything. However, one thing does remain the same:

*"Gregor's serious wound, from which he suffered for over a month - the apple remained imbedded in his flesh as a visible souvenir since no one dared to remove it - seemed to have reminded even his father that Gregor was a member of the family, in spite of his present pathetic and repulsive shape, who could not be treated as an enemy; that on the contrary, it was the commandment of family duty to swallow their disgust and endure him, endure him and nothing more."* The Metamorphosis, Chapter 3, pg. 40

Gregor is lethargic, like a war veteran, unable to move quickly. His family is, as well. Mr. Samsa falls asleep for long periods of time in the evening, while Mrs. Samsa sews for her new job making clothing for a store. Grete has also gotten a job as a salesgirl, but continues to study at night in order to better her future. The family realizes that they cannot afford to continue living in their house, but simultaneously cannot conceive of transporting Gregor. Although he realizes it would take little more than a large box with a few air holes, the family cannot fathom leaving their home. "What the world demands of poor people they did to the utmost of their ability; his father brought breakfast for the minor officials at the bank, his mother sacrificed herself to the underwear of strangers, his sister ran back and forth behind the counter at the request of the customers; but for anything more than this they did not have the strength." The Metamorphosis, Chapter 3, pg. 42 The family leaves Gregor alone, regardless of their own activities. Gregor sleeps little, awake during both the days and nights, sometimes daydreaming of helping support his family once again. Those positive thoughts return to hurt and anger when he thinks of them leaving him alone, dirty, and helpless.

Topic Tracking: Money 5

Topic Tracking: Solitude 5

A cleaning woman comes to help the family out with the daily chores. Surprisingly, she is not frightened by Gregor's appearance and keeps his door cracked so that she may always peak at him. She calls him a 'dung beetle' and sometimes taunts him; but nonetheless, like the other members of the family, she does not ignore him completely. She cleans his room at her own desire, frustrating him into eating less. Gregor hardly eats anymore, only taking in the food he passes.

Gregor's room also becomes increasingly cluttered, as the family places all extraneous junk, trash, and bulk in his space to store. In order to supplement their income, the family takes on three borders, who bring with them their own goods and furniture. Again, Gregor's room becomes more cluttered. These three borders are men with long beards, all who expect cleanliness and perfect surroundings. When they eat - seated at the same table where the Samsa family used to dine - Grete and Anna hold their breath with desperation that the men like their meals. Meanwhile, Gregor cries that his hunger



is severe, for he cannot eat properly without teeth. The family cares little, as they continue to eat in the kitchen.

Topic Tracking: Money 6

After dinner, the three borders read their papers and smoke in relaxation in the living room. They are charmed by the music of a violin coming from inside the kitchen. Instead of asking the noise to stop, they request Grete and her violin to come into the living room. Mr. and Mrs. Samsa stand on either side of their daughter, beaming with pride, as her music lures the men and Gregor into a trance. Gregor, careless of his surroundings, comes out of the room - covered in dust and food - to the room to hear his sister play violin. The roomers have meanwhile become bored with Grete's playing, realizing it is far from the quality to which they are accustomed. After following Grete along with the music, they realize that her talent is scarce, and they retreat to the window to blow smoke. Gregor, mesmerized by his sister, continues to inch forward in the living room, hoping to express his non-animal state to his family. He wonders if an animal could be so moved by such beauty and music. He remembers his plans of sending Grete to the conservatory, as he had planned to announce at Christmas before his metamorphosis.

Topic Tracking: Family 8

Suddenly, one of the borders raises his fingers to Gregor, gesturing his observance of the large bug in his presence. While initially, the roomers are entertained by Gregor's presence, they eventually become outraged, throwing a tantrum in the Samsa household expressing their rage at how close they have lived to Gregor. During the uprising, Grete gives her violin to Mrs. Samsa to hold delicately. Mrs. Samsa has difficulty breathing, grabbing her chest, as one of the borders gives his notice to Mr. Samsa of leaving the apartment. He claims he will not pay a single cent of money to the Samsas, and perhaps may even call the authorities and file claims against them. Soon enough, the other borders jump to his side and also announce their impending exodus.

Topic Tracking: Money 7

As the family witnesses the drastic event that has just occurred in their house, Mr. Samsa collapses on the sofa, Mrs. Samsa, releases all the tension in her hands, allowing the violin to drop onto the floor with a loud clang. When they calm down, Grete speaks to her parents in regards to future action. "I won't pronounce the name of my brother in front of this monster, and so all I say is: we have to try and get rid of it. We've done everything humanly possible to take care of it and to put up with it; I don't think anyone can blame us in the least." *The Metamorphosis*, Chapter 3, pg. 51 Mr. Samsa quickly agrees with his daughter, in sadness, while Mrs. Samsa can only clutch her chest and cry. Grete cries that she cannot put up with the torture anymore, especially after working all day long so hard. Grete continues to plead with her parents that the creature has to leave. In her mind, it is no longer Gregor and is something that is torturing the family, forcing them to live in horror, take over the house, and is tainting her brother's memory. She genuinely believes that the creature is no longer her brother; she claims that if it were still Gregor, then, it would leave them alone in peace. Mrs. Samsa



says nothing and lies outstretched in paralyzed emotional distress, while Mr. Samsa wonders what they should do. As he hears every word, Gregor decidedly against scaring his sister, begins to turn around to return to his room. Upon his first movement, she shrieks at his body, in fear of his possible violence. When he finally enters his room, he hopes his family will have more sympathy. Instead, Grete locks the door with anxiety and fervor, turns to her parents, and wonders what the next step will be.

Topic Tracking: Family 9

Gregor hears every word from his sister's mouth. He feels weak. The rotten apple still encased in his back is infected and covered with dust and dirt. He remains awake until three in the morning, where he looks outside and sees light beginning to appear. In this moment, he lets air out of his nostrils one last time and dies. The following morning, the cleaning lady very loudly enters the house slamming doors (much to the chagrin of the Samsa family). She walks into Gregor's room, unfazed by his motionless appearance, thinking him asleep like usual. When she eventually taunts and prods him, she discovers his death and shrieks to her master that "it" has croaked and is dead. The family and borders rush to the room and witness Gregor's still body lying on the floor. Mr. Samsa immediately asks the borders to leave his house.

The Samsa family decides to take the day off from work to rest and think of Gregor. The three sit down and write letters to their respective employers about their predicament and loss, and ponder the future. The cleaning lady enters to claim that she has taken care of the mess in the next room, namely Gregor. After she leaves, they announce their plans to fire her that evening. Grete and her parents go for a walk into town, on the trolley, and in the beautiful clean air. They think of moving out of their house (chosen by Gregor) into a smaller and cheaper apartment. As the day draws to a close, Mr. and Mrs. Samsa realize that their beautiful daughter is now of a fruitful age in which she must find a husband. "Growing quieter and communicating almost unconsciously through glances, they thought that it would soon be time, too, to find her a good husband. And it was like a confirmation of their new dreams and good intentions when at the end of the ride their daughter got up first and stretched her young body." *The Metamorphosis*, Chapter 3, pg. 58

Topic Tracking: Family 10



# First Sorrow

This short story examines the character of a trapeze artist, a profession esteemed and separate from the rest of the community.

*"A trapeze artist - this art, practiced high in the domes of the great variety theaters, is acknowledged to be one of the most difficult within men's reach - had arranged his life, at first simply out of perfectionism, but later also from the force of a habit which has grown tyrannical, in such a way that he remained, for the whole period of each engagement, day and night on his trapeze."* First Sorrow, pg. 182

Although the trapeze artist is at the top of his world and talent pool, he is also at the top of the community, as he spends all his time in the dome in his trapeze. He has little time and little social contact, save the few people who climb up to speak with him. And although this trapeze artist has no problem with heights and near-death experiences, he has trouble with and a fear of traveling. His manager, therefore, tries to minimize the traumas associated with traveling by arranging comfortable trains and sleeping quarters.

Topic Tracking: Solitude 6

One day, the trapeze artist pleads with his manager to arrange for a second trapeze to be added to his act. The manager wonders why, for after so many years, he has always performed with merely one. The trapeze artist expresses his fear and concern about flying in the air with simply one trapeze; after all, two trapezes are always better than one...and safer, too. It is much harder to fall when there is more to use in the air. The manager quickly agrees and realizes all the variation that it will bring to the act.

Later that night, the manager looks at his star artist. He sees a furrow beginning to develop permanent lines in the brow of the trapeze artist.



# A Little Woman

The narrator of the short story opens by describing a young woman in exceptional detail and of moderate beauty and tightly wound anxiety. She has perfect anatomical hands, dirty blonde hair, puts her clothes together nicely, and expresses herself exactly as a young woman should do so. One problem exists between the narrator and this little woman. She believes he annoys her at every turn, every motion, every disturbance, and every utterance. He cannot understand such frustration, for he believes they are merely strangers. Nonetheless, her existence would improve greatly if he were to cease existence...or at least cease communication with her altogether.

*"Now this little woman is highly dissatisfied with me, she always has some fault to find with me, I am always doing her an injustice, I annoy her at every turn; if it were possible to divide up one's life into the smallest of its parts and judge each part separately, there is no doubt that she would find every smallest part of my own life offensive. I have often wondered why it is that I should offend her so; it may be that everything about me runs counter to her aesthetic feelings, her sense of justice, her habits, her traditions, her hopes - such mutually incompatible natures do exist, but why does this cause her so much pain?"* A Little Woman, pg. 185

The hatred and annoyance continues and spreads into their lives. Although the narrator persists on stating their relationship as strangers, the little woman's frustration grows to cover every aspect of her life. Her family cannot understand such problems, for they know not where to turn to help her. Nothing seems to annoy her except the narrator. Everyone around them is innocent to her ways, and the anxiety spreads into her appearance and work habit. The only reasonable explanation to her hatred and pure anger towards the narrator would rest in a fallen relationship or broken heart; however, the two remain strangers and have never known one another. The narrator claims that the little woman is strong and resilient and possesses qualities that will allow her to pull herself out of such a dangerous emotional state just as easily as she found herself within it.

The narrator, contemplating the situation deeper, wonders what will help this little woman with her obsession of frustration with him. He thinks that perhaps his own suicide might be her only salvation. And, upon further thought, he brings the problem up with a friend. The friend tells him not to speak of it with anyone at all, for it may be perceived as something more than it actually is. So, the narrator continues to live his life, keeping the matter concealed as much as possible, knowing that the woman lives on continually in rage.

Topic Tracking: Solitude 7



## A Hunger Artist (also translated as a Fasting Artist)

The story opens with a description of the old-fashioned hunger or fasting artist, who spends his time on public display, behind caged spectacles starving for a cause or for art. He lives his lives there, with ribs protruding, allowing young children to look, poke, and fear his awe, strength, and courage. However, there has been a large decline in these hunger artists in the last decades. The hunger artists used to persist in a little cage, watched almost constantly by "butcher" night watchmen who look over him at all hours to make sure he does not escape to find food or eat any droppings left by spectators. The manager of the hunger artist even watched over him to justify his artistry. Women are amazed at the hunger artist's ability to sing and starve at the same time. When the spectacle is brought to full effect, after forty days of fasting, the artist is brought to a ring in which crowds of people - especially women - pay to watch him. They even bring him food in order to make him say no. Eventually, a young woman leads him out of his cage to a meager meal. However, why would he accept food after such a long fast when he can make it longer? Eventually, the manager spoon feeds the hunger artist with food, after he had reached his forty days, and the crowd would cheer and disperse. The hunger artist then remains the only person left alone. However, as this world declines, so does the respect and admiration for the hunger artist, and he no longer persists in such a miraculous spectacle.

Years later, the hunger artist is placed in a circus, with the animals and far from the grand spectacle of decades earlier. Children still stop and look at him, but do not understand the pain and diligence of the art of the hunger artist. The manager does not take care of him as he used to, nor do the people. At the circus, parents of children recall their fond memories of witnessing such amazing feats of the hunger artist, and soon move on to other spectacles in the circus.

The previous days of glory did fulfill the artist; he had little rest between his fasts and looked forward to the excitement of the exhaustion and weakness. But, now, that time is over.

*"Just try to explain to someone what the art of fasting is. No one who does not feel it can be made to grasp what it means. The beautiful placards became dirty and illegible, they were ripped down, no one thought of replacing them; the little board showing the tally of days fasted, which at first had been scrupulously changed each day, had now long stayed unaltered, for after the first few weeks the staff had grown weary of even this little task; and so the hunger artist did indeed go fasting on, as he had once dreamed of doing, but no one counted the days, no one, not even the hunger artist himself, knew how great his achievement was, and his hearty grew heavy. And once in a while some casual passer-by should stop, ridicule the outdated number of the board and talk about fraudulence, that in its way the stupidest lie that ever indifference and inborn malice could invent, for it was not the hunger artist who was cheating, he was*



*working honestly, but the world was cheating him out of his reward."* A Hunger Artist, pp. 199-200

Years later even, the people stop looking at the hunger artist and cease to admire his work. His cage looks empty and the circus overseer wonders what became of it. Upon closer look, he sees the weak hunger artist below the leaves in the cage, barely alive. The overseer tells him he no longer has to fast. However, the hunger artist claims that he must fast; he has no other choice. He would eat happily like the rest of the people if he could only find nourishment that satisfies him. Nothing has ever satisfied him, so he starved out of necessity. Upon proclaiming these words, he dies. The circus buries him and places a young panther in his cage.

Topic Tracking: Solitude 8



# Josephine, the Songstress or: The Mouse People

Josephine is a rarity among the mouse people, for she has the innate ability to sing. She can not only sing, but she can sing beautifully, helping all the mouse people continue with their hardworking lives. Some of the mouse people dislike her and do not believe she is truly singing, while others gather round to listen to her, use her feeble vocal chords to their utmost strength, and treasure her femininity. Some of the mouse people wonder if Josephine is truly singing, for they wonder if mice can sing or if they simply just pipe? Depending on the position facing Josephine, her music sounds like great piping and sometimes it sounds like true music. At times, she pouts and stammers as a woman, bringing chaos and chatter amongst the people; yet, when she sings, she brings a hush to the crowd, and everyone realizes that she is special. They must protect their dear Josephine, for she is one of a kind.

Topic Tracking: Family 11

*"Sometimes I have the impression that our people sees its relationship with Josephine rather like this: that she, this fragile, vulnerable, somehow distinguished creature, in her opinion distinguished by her song, has been entrusted to us and that we must look after her; the reason for this is not clear to anyone, only the fact seems to be established. But what has been entrusted to one's care one does not laugh at; to do so would be a breach of duty; the utmost spite that the most spiteful amongst us can vent on Josephine is when they sometimes say: 'When we see Josephine it is no laughing matter.'"*

Josephine, pg. 106-107

The mouse people see themselves as children and the elderly at the same time. Both under-appreciating music and living their lives in a static fashion. They overindulge and under-indulge and cannot appreciate true music. They pipe a little, but do not see it as anything except piping. All of this is true, save Josephine. Her music is the only sound that is permissive among the mouse people, for they do like it and listen to it.

As time progresses, people feel differently about Josephine and her music, thinking her pompous, thinking her lazy, and simultaneously thinking her a gift to the community. She rarely does her work, yet still gets her daily ration of food. When she injures herself barely, she works even less. No other mouse would be tolerated in the community.

Eventually, Josephine is missing; nobody can find her and everyone misses her music, her piping, and her singing. Yet, after enough time searching, she is lost, and gone forever. Their lives continue as normal.

Topic Tracking: Solitude 9

*"So perhaps we shall not miss so very much after all, while Josephine, for her part, delivered from earthly afflictions, which however to her mind are the privilege of chosen*



*spirits, will happily lose herself in the countless throng of the heroes of our people, and soon, since we pursue no history, be accorded the heightened deliverance of being forgotten along with all her brethren." Josephine, pg. 116*