



TRANSCRIPT BOOKTUBE MARIE-PIERRE: “THE METAMORPHOSIS” BY FRANZ KAFKA

Hey there! It's Marie-Pierre, librarian at the Goethe-Institut Montreal. Today, I'd like to tell you about the timeless classic “The Metamorphosis” by Franz Kafka.

„One morning, when Gregor Samsa woke from troubled dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a horrible vermin.“ Right away we are plunged into Samsa's newfound condition, and we follow his first thoughts, on the alienating nature of his work as a traveling salesman, and on his lack of sleep, which he blames for his current predicament. Realizing that he is also running late for work, his anxiety rises some more; his boss is not the understanding type, and even though he has never called in sick in five years, he dares not think of doing *that*, lest he lose his job. Finally, the last thing he wants to do is alarm his family. At first he is able to communicate with them that everything is fine and he will be out shortly – even though this is far from the truth – but then even his voice becomes unrecognizable. At last, he is able to open his bedroom door, to the shock and horror of everyone present. And still, he worries about his job, saying he'll be right on his way, hoping his manager will put in a good word for him at the office.

It's easy enough to draw parallels between Samsa's working conditions from over 100 years ago, and the working conditions of many people around the world today. In his reflections, we also see Gregor yearn for human connection, and for more recognition from his family, for all he's been doing for them.

Throughout the story, Gregor finds very little understanding for his unwanted transformation. His younger sister does show him kindness and compassion at the beginning, trying to find which foods he likes and cleaning his room thoroughly, but soon her new and tiring work routine leads her to neglect and even resent him. Injured, slowed down and depressed, even though Kafka does not use that word, Gregor lets out his last breath. This small but powerful novella shows that Kafka's work is still relevant today.

Perhaps you'd like to find out more about Kafka; well you're in luck. On the occasion of what would have been Kafka's 140th birthday in 2023, and the 100th anniversary of his death in 2024, several Goethe-Instituts teamed up for a web dossier delving into who Kafka was as a person, and his continued influence on our society. There are several articles to choose from at goethe.de/kafka, and more content will be added throughout the year. This masterpiece from Kafka is available in the Onleihe, our virtual library. It's such a short read – I like to revisit it every few years, and I find it resonates differently with me each time. Perhaps it will be the same for you! Until our next video, happy reading!

WANT MORE KAFKA? -> www.goethe.de/kafka

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