



10th Grade

Midterm Study Guide

The Metamorphosis- Franz Kafka (USE NOTES TO STUDY)

What is absurdism?

- Absurdism is a philosophy that highlights the conflict between our desire to find meaning in life and the chaotic, indifferent universe that provides none.
- In literature, **absurdism** refers to works that explore the idea that life is meaningless and chaotic, often highlighting the struggle to find purpose in an indifferent universe. These stories typically feature characters facing bizarre situations, illogical events, and a lack of clear answers. The tone is often darkly humorous or surreal.
- The **opening** line of **The Metamorphosis** reveals **Gregor's shocking transformation** into a giant insect, setting the tone for the story. The straightforward way this strange event is described highlights the contrast between the bizarre situation and the ordinary language, suggesting that the narrator sees the world as absurd and chaotic rather than rational and orderly.
- When he first realizes he has transformed, he doesn't seem very upset and reacts as if it's just another disturbance to his sleep, treating it as somewhat normal. As the story unfolds, he continues to focus on everyday worries like losing his job, his comfort, and his family's finances, which keeps the **absurd tone** of the story consistent.
- **What are some reasons Gregor dislikes/abhors his job?**
 - a. Long hours, little reward
 - b. Strict boss, lack of freedom
 - c. Only continues as a traveling salesman to pay off his parents' debt
 - d. Treated differently than other traveling salesmen
- The mother hints at Gregor's lack of friends while speaking to the office manager about his work ethic.
- She mentions that Gregor never goes out at night; he spends his time reading the newspaper or

checking train schedules. This suggests that Gregor already lives in **isolation**.

- After his transformation, he is no longer physically human.
- He is unable to go to work and his voice is altered, preventing him from communicating.
- When he opens the door and is seen by the office manager and his family, they are horrified.
- **These details foreshadow that Gregor's isolation from others will only continue to increase.**
- This all adds back to Kafka's concept of **entrapment**.

Family Relationship

- There is not only a shift in the state of Gregor's existence, but rather also on the reliance of one another.
- Prior to his transformation, the family lived on his wages and paycheck. He is far more troubled by his sense of duty and responsibility to his family than by his strange physical condition. After he becomes a bug, he relies on them entirely for everything.
- His sister Grete, mother, and father can no longer see or treat him as they did before.
- The only family member that may treat him with kindness is Grete, his sister. She begins to be compassionate and kind, attempting to bring him what he needs and likes. **With time, this changes.**

Gregor's Sense of Identity (Theme)

- Despite his shocking physical transformation, Gregor retains many of the thoughts, feelings, and desires he had as a human. Initially, he struggles to grasp the full extent of his change, thinking he is only "temporarily incapacitated." As time goes on, Gregor realizes he has become a source of horror for his family and begins to adopt new behaviors, like eating spoiled food and crawling on the walls. However, he refuses to part with reminders of his human life, such as the furniture in his room: "Nothing should be taken out of his room; everything must remain as it was; he could not do without the positive influence of the furniture on his state of mind; and even if the furniture made it difficult for him to crawl around, that was not a disadvantage but a great advantage."
- Even towards the end of "The Metamorphosis", Gregor believes that parts of his human identity are still intact. When he hears Grete playing the violin, his thoughts focus on his inner human qualities—like affection and inspiration. He wonders, "Was he an animal, that music had such an effect on him?" Feeling drawn to the music, he is determined to reach his sister, hoping to show her that he appreciates her playing more than anyone else. Despite his transformation into an insect, Gregor expresses deeply human traits, like an appreciation for art, which he lacked in his previous overworked, business-focused life.

The Fall of the House of Usher

Gothic literature takes readers into the dark, nightmare world of the supernatural. It is typically set

in spooky places such as dank, mysterious castles or crumbling estates, and there is usually some element of fear or horror. Typical Gothic elements include

- Imagination, freedom, and intense emotion as opposed to reason and restraint
- Supernatural events that defy logic, including ghosts and monsters
- Multiple narrators, plot lines, symbols, and themes
- Dark, gloomy mood and tone and ornate, complex, dramatic language
- Cheerless, tormented characters, outsider narrators
- Mystery, fear, and terror as ways to provoke deepest emotions

1. Setting: The story is set in the decaying mansion of the Usher family, surrounded by a bleak landscape featuring dark, overcast skies and a gloomy atmosphere. The house itself is described as old and ominous, contributing to the overall sense of foreboding.

2. Drawing of the House: The house can be depicted as a large, dark, and eerie structure with a gothic design. Key features to include are:

- Tall, pointed windows.
- A large, ominous front entrance.
- A surrounding tarn (a small lake).
- A cracked and weathered exterior.

3. “The entire family lay in a direct line of descent...”: This phrase means that the Usher family has a long, unbroken lineage, with very few changes over time. It implies a sense of stagnation and the burden of family legacy, emphasizing their isolation and decline.

4. Similarities/Differences Between Poe and Roderick: Both Poe and Roderick share a pale appearance, suggesting a connection to themes of decay and illness. However, while Poe's expression might reflect creativity and depth, Roderick's is often filled with anxiety and madness, highlighting his deteriorating mental state.

5. Nature of Roderick's Illness: Roderick suffers from a deep-seated mental illness, characterized by extreme sensitivity to light, sound, and touch, causing him great distress.

****Madeline's illness**** is more physical; she appears to be in a cataleptic state, suffering from a mysterious ailment that leads to her seeming death.

6. Twins Symbolism/Theory of the Double: By making Roderick and Madeline twins, Poe emphasizes their deep connection and interdependence. ****Madeline**** represents death and the physical aspect of the family's decay, while ****Roderick**** embodies the mind's deterioration and the impact of isolation.

7. Summary of “The Haunted Palace”: The poem describes a once-beautiful palace that represents a mind filled with joy and harmony. Over time, it falls into decay, symbolizing the decline of both the palace and its ruler, mirroring Roderick's mental deterioration.

8. Cause of Roderick's Illness: Roderick believes his illness is linked to his family's history and the oppressive atmosphere of the house, suggesting that the house itself has a malevolent influence on him.

9. Burial Location: Roderick buries Madeline in a tomb within the house's catacombs, chosen for its proximity to the family home, reflecting his desire to keep her close, even in death.

10. Madeline's Vault Symbolism: Madeline's vault symbolizes entrapment and the inescapable ties of family. Her burial in a hidden place emphasizes themes of decay and isolation, contributing to the story's dark mood.

11. Roderick's Reaction: Roderick is initially distraught but later exhibits a sense of numbness and disbelief regarding Madeline's death, reflecting his fragile mental state.

12. "The Mad Trist": A "trist" can refer to a brief romantic encounter, but here it likely means a tale of madness. "Mad" can also mean insane. In the tale, events parallel the story's tension, as the violent actions in the narrative mirror Roderick's own emotional turmoil.

13. Madeline After Death: After her burial, Madeline awakens from her cataleptic state and emerges from her tomb, shocking Roderick and symbolizing the return of repressed trauma.

14. Roderick's Inaction: Roderick does not rescue her because he is in shock and disbelief; his mental state prevents him from processing the reality of her situation.

15. Roderick's Death: Roderick dies from fear and shock when he sees Madeline emerge from her tomb, symbolizing the culmination of his madness and the breakdown of his mind.

16. Structural Problem of the House: The house's structural issues, such as cracks and decay, parallel Roderick's mental illness, suggesting that both are inextricably linked. The deterioration of the house reflects the collapse of the Usher family legacy.

17. House Breakdown: The house collapses at the end of the story, symbolizing the complete destruction of the Usher lineage and the ultimate fate of Roderick and Madeline.

18. Narrator Significance: The narrator is a friend of Roderick who witnesses the events unfold. His perspective is significant as it provides an outsider's view of the Usher family's decline and adds to the eerie atmosphere of the story.

19. Theme of the Story: Key themes include the decay of the mind and body, the inescapability of family legacy, and the interplay between art and madness. The story explores how isolation and trauma can lead to destruction, both personally and physically.

Grammar:

Phrases vs. Clauses

A clause is a group of words that has a subject and a verb.

- a. An independent clause expresses a complete thought and can stand by itself as a complete sentence.
- b. A subordinate, or dependent clause cannot stand by itself as a sentence because it does not express a complete thought. Subordinate clauses begin with words such as since, that, until, which, because, although, when, as if, after, unless, before, if, and as though.

A phrase is two or more related words that do not contain the subject-verb pair necessary to form a clause.

Phrases can be very short or quite long.

Phrases have specific names based on the type of word that begins or governs the word group: noun phrase, verb phrase, prepositional phrase, infinitive phrase, participle phrase, and gerund phrase.

Types of Phrases:

a. Prepositions and prepositional phrases

A **preposition** is a word used with a noun or a pronoun to form a prepositional phrase.

A **prepositional phrase** is a group of words that begins with a preposition and includes an object and any modifiers.

Prepositions are words such as **in, under, and over**. A preposition can consist of more than one word, such as in spite of, in addition to, or according to.

In each of the following examples, the preposition is underlined, and the object of the preposition is in boldface.

Examples: on the **bridge** near the **bridge** over the **bridge**

b. Verb Phrases

A **verb phrase** contains a main verb and its helping verbs. Like a one-word verb, a verb phrase may express action or state of being.

Examples:

The nation is celebrating the centennial of its independence. (verb phrase)

I do not faithfully remember those bleeding children of sorrow. . . . (Note: adverbs such as not and faithfully are not part of the verb phrase since they are not verbs or helping verbs.)

A verb names an action or condition.

A verb phrase includes a verb and one or more auxiliary verbs.

Auxiliary verbs come before the main verb and give additional information about the action or condition, such as the verb tense, mood, and voice.

Sometimes a verb phrase is interrupted by a modifier, such as not, never, or always, and contractions of those words.

Writing:

Informative Writing ([expository](#))

- aims to educate readers by presenting factual, objective, and unbiased information about a specific topic, using credible sources to explain concepts and processes

- **Purpose:** To inform, explain, or educate the reader about a particular topic without trying to change their mind or evoke a specific emotional response.
- **Objectivity:** The writing must be impartial, presenting facts and statistics without personal opinions, philosophies, or bias.
- **Accuracy:** Information should be precise, thorough, and based on credible sources or the writer's personal knowledge.
- **Clarity and Conciseness:** Ideas and information should be organized logically and presented clearly to make them easy for the reader to understand.
- **Fact-Based:** It relies on facts, evidence, and explanations rather than subjective arguments or emotional appeals

