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ANALYZE CRAFT AND STRUCTURE MODERNISM

The Metamorphosis

Franz Kafka

“The Metamorphosis” is an example of **Modernism**, a form of creative expression that developed during the twentieth century, representing a radical break with the traditions of the past. Modernist ideas developed in response to dramatic changes around the world, including the rapid rise of industry, the shift from rural to urban society, and the brutal horrors of World War I. Modernism presents a world that is slightly off what we would expect, in which the normally accepted rules do not seem to apply. As a result, Modernist works can be troubling and disturbing. Kafka’s story is an example of **Absurdist literature**, a form of Modernist writing that features elements such as:

- **Ambiguity:** The story is open-ended and key parts or elements are never explained.
- **Fantastic or Dreamlike Elements:** Events blur the boundary between what is real and unreal.
- **Themes of Alienation:** Modernist works often feature isolated characters who experience increasing alienation or disconnection.

DIRECTIONS: Answer the following questions about “The Metamorphosis.” Use textual evidence from the story to support your responses.

1. In what way is the story of “The Metamorphosis” fantastical?

The story is fantastical because it begins with an impossible event — Gregor Samsa waking up transformed into a giant insect — which defies natural laws and blends the ordinary with the surreal.

2. In what ways could Kafka’s story be said to be ambiguous?

Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* is ambiguous because it never explains why or how Gregor transforms, whether the change is literal or symbolic, or what the story ultimately means. This openness allows many interpretations — psychological, social, or existential — without a single clear answer

3. Is Gregor Samsa alienated? Explain.

In *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa is profoundly alienated from society, his family, and himself. Even before his transformation, his exhausting job isolates him and reduces his human worth to his ability to work. After he becomes an insect, his family rejects him, revealing the conditional nature of their love. Trapped in a body he no longer recognizes, Gregor becomes completely cut off from human connection, a powerful symbol of modern alienation and loss of identity.

4. In what sense could the story be said to be like a dream?

The story feels like a dream because it mixes the bizarre with the ordinary — Gregor's transformation is accepted with little explanation, creating a strange, illogical world that reflects the logic and mood of a dream.