

Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis"



Franz Kafka (1883-1924) was born in Prague and was unknown as a writer during his life. Kafka was plagued by feelings of unworthiness and debilitating anxiety due to his Jewish background, his emotionally abusive relationship with his father, and his health problems (he was diagnosed with tuberculosis at 34 and eventually died from it 7 years later). It was not until after his death that his writings began to be translated and he gained international status as a foundational figure in Modernist literature. In fact, his small body of work has become so influential that it led to a new word: **Kafkaesque**, which means senseless, disorienting complexity; a sense of impending danger or surreal distortion; or nightmarish. Kafka's work often presents characters who are trapped in absurd situations that reflect realistic problems.

These absurd situations are often allegories, or stories that signify a universal lesson by presenting characters, plots, and images that symbolize another actual situation. The lesson to be learned from an allegory has a religious, social, moral, or political significance and characters are often personifications of abstract ideas such as greed, charity, or envy. Many critics read *The Metamorphosis* as an allegory about modern life.