The Metamorphosis

Group Task #1: Diction

Group 1

Read the following passage from Chapter 1 of *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka. Mark it up. Discuss your reactions with your group. Then answer the question below.

“His room, a regular human room, only a little on the small side, lay quiet between the four familiar walls. Over the table, on which an unpacked line of fabric samples was all spread out—Samsa was a traveling salesman—hung the picture which he had recently cut out of a glossy magazine and lodged in a pretty gilt frame. It showed a lady done up in a fur hat and a fur boa, sitting upright and raising up against the viewer a heavy fur muff in which her whole forearm had disappeared” (1157).

Explain what is happening at this point in the story. What is the purpose of this description? Focus on **diction**.

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Group 2

Read the following passage from Chapter 1 of *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka. Mark it up. Discuss your reactions with your group. Then answer the question below.

“’Oh God,’ he thought, ‘what a grueling job I’ve picked! Day in, day out—on the road. The upset of doing business is much worse than the actual business in the home office, and, besides, I’ve got the torture of traveling, worrying about changing trains, eating miserable food at all hours, constantly seeing new faces, no relationships that last or get more intimate. To the devil with it all!”” (1157).

Explain what is happening at this point in the story. What does this passage reveal about Gregor’s life? What is the irony here? Focus on **diction**.

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Group 3

Read the following passage from Chapter 1 of *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka. Mark it up. Discuss your reactions with your group. Then answer the question below.

“But when, once again, after the same exertion, he lay in his original position, sighing and again watched his little legs struggling, if possible more fiercely, with each other and saw no way of bringing peace and order into this mindless motion, he again told himself that it was impossible for him to stay in bed and that the most rational thing was to make any sacrifice for even the smallest hope of freeing himself form the bed. But at the same time he did not forget to remind himself occasionally that thinking things over calmly—indeed, as calmly as possible—was much better than jumping to desperate decisions. At such moments he fixed his eyes as sharply as possible on the window, but unfortunately, there was little confidence and cheer to be gotten from the view of the morning fog, which shrouded even the other side of the narrow street. ‘Seven o’clock already,’ he said to himself as the alarm clock struck again, ‘seven o’clock already and still such a fog.’ And for a little while he lay quietly, breathing shallowly, as if expecting, perhaps, from the complete silence the return of things to the way they really and naturally were” (1159).

Explain what is happening at this point in the story. What is the irony here? Focus on **diction**.

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Group 4

Read the following passage from Chapter 1 of *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka. Mark it up. Discuss your reactions with your group. Then answer the question below.

“But groping for support, Gregor immediately fell down with a little cry onto his numerous little legs. This had hardly happened when for the first time that morning he had a feeling of physical well-being; his little legs were on firm ground; they obeyed him completely, as he noted to his joy; they even strained to carry him away wherever he wanted to go; and he already believed that final recovery from all his sufferings was imminent (1165-1166).

Explain what is happening at this point in the story. How does the author (and translator) want us to view Gregor? How does Gregor view himself? Focus on **diction**.

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Group 5

Read the following passage from Chapter 1 of *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka. Mark it up. Discuss your reactions with your group. Then answer the question below.

“Pitilessly his father came on, hissing like a wild man. . . If only his father did not keeping making this intolerable hissing sound! It made Gregor lose his head completely. He had almost finished the turn when—his mind continually on this hissing—he made a mistake and even started turning back around to his original position . . . Of course in his father’s present state of mind it did not even remotely occur to him to open the other wing of the door in order to give Gregor enough room to pass through . . . Instead, he drove Gregor on, as if there were no obstacle, with exceptional loudness; the voice behind Gregor did not sound like that of only a single father . . .” (1166-1167).

Explain what is happening at this point in the story. How does the author (and the translator) want us to view Gregor’s father? Focus on **diction**.