

***Metamorphosis*, by Franz Kafka (1915)**

**Selected Passages**

These selected passages will be used in the Argument Stations Activity and other argument-based activities during the unit. Page numbers refer to the Prestwick House edition of the novel, translated by M.A. Roberts (2005).

**1**

“‘Oh God,’ he thought, ‘what a strenuous occupation I’ve chosen. Always on the road, day out, day in. The rigors of the job are much greater than if I were working locally, and, furthermore, the nuisances of traveling are always imposed upon me – the worries about train connections, bad meals at irregular intervals, fleeting human contact that is ever-changing, never lasting, and never expected to be genuine. To the devil with it all!’” (14).

**2**

“‘If I didn’t hold back for my parents’ sake, I’d have quit ages ago. I would go to the boss and state my opinion out loud from the bottom of my heart. He would’ve fallen right off his desk! He’s a strange sort, sitting up on that desk and speaking down to the employee from on high like that. Moreover, the boss has trouble hearing, and one has to step up close to him’” (14).

**3**

“‘At any rate, hope is not completely gone: once I’ve collected the money to pay off my parents’ debt to him – that should take antoher five or six years – I’ll do it for sure. I’ll cut all ties and move on. In any case, right now I have to get up; my train leaves at five’” (14 – 15).

**4**

“However, after a similar effort whereby he brought himself with a deep sigh back into his prone position and once again saw his little legs fighting one another with even more fury than before, if such a thing were possible, and didn’t see any chance of bringing peace and order to this arbitrary movement, he told himself again that he couldn’t possibly remain in bed and that it might be the most reasonable thing to sacrifice everything if there were even the slightest hope of freeing himself from bed in the process. At the same moment, however, he didn’t forget now and then to remember that the calm and calmest contemplation would be much better than desperate conclusions” (17-18).

**5**

“‘I originally had the intention of keeping all of this between the two of us, but since you are letting me waste my time here uselessly, I don’t know why your parents shouldn’t also learn about it. Your performance has also been quite unsatisfactory of late; it’s hardly the time of year for making exceptional sales, we acknowledge that, but there is no such thing at all as a time of year for making no sales, Mr. Samsa; such a thing will not be permitted’” (21-22).

**6**

“Gregor, however, had become much calmer. All right, people did not understand his words any more, although they seemed clear enough to him, clearer than before, perhaps because his ears had become accustomed to them” (23).

**7**

“She then took two steps towards Gregor and collapsed right in the middle of her skirts, which were spread out all around her; her face was sunk on her breast, completely concealed. The father clenched his fist, showing a hostile expression, as if he wanted to push Gregor back into his room, then looked uncertainly around the living room, covered his eyes with his hands, and cried so that his mighty breast shook” (25).

**8**

“Now and then he stood up from the table and took some receipt of ledger out of his small lockbox, saved from the successful collapse of his business five years ago . . . . He had had the impression that the father had nothing at all left from his former business, or, at least, father had not said anything to the contrary, and at any rate, Gregor hadn’t asked about it. Gregor’s only concern had been to do everything in his power to allow his family to forget, as quickly as possible, the bad business luck that had brought them to complete despair” (36-37).

**9**

“When it came to conversing about the necessity of earning money, the first thing Gregor did was run away from the door and throw himself on the cool leather sofa near the door, as he was very hot with shame and sorrow” (38-39).

**10**

“Later, however, they needed to hold her back forcefully, and when she cried, ‘Let me in to Gregor; he is my unfortunate son! Don’t you understand that I have to go to him?’ Then Gregor thought that perhaps it would actually be good if the mother came in – not every day, of course, but perhaps once per week; she understood everything much better than the sister, who, in spite of all her courage, was still just a child” (41).

**11**

“Was he even now close to forgetting, and was it only the voice of the mother, long unheard, that had roused him? Nothing should be removed; all must remain; he could not do without the beneficial influence of the furniture upon his condition; and if the furniture prevented him from carrying on with his senseless crawling about, then that was no loss – it was rather a great advantage” (43).

**12**

“Then he saw, conspicuously hanging on the otherwise empty wall, the picture of the lady clothed in nothing bur fur, and crawled quickly up to it and pressed himself up against the glass that held the picture in place, and it felt good against his hot underbelly. At least nobody would take this picture that Gregor was completely covering up” (45).

**13**

“But Grete’s words had worried the mother; she stepped to the side, saw the giant brown mark on the flowered wallpaper, and, before she really came to the realization that it was Gregor she saw, she said in a hoarse, shrieking voice, ‘Oh God, oh, God!’ and, with her arms wide, as if giving everything up, fell on the couch and didn’t stir” (45).

**14**

“Only with his last glance did he see how the door of the his room had been torn open, how the mother ran out in front of the screaming sister (mother was in her underwear because the sister had undressed her to help her breathe more easily when she fainted), and how the mother then ran to the father; on her way to him, her fastened skirts slid one after another to the floor and as she tripped over the skirts, she assaulted the father and threw her arms around him, uniting wholly with him – Gregor’s sight then failed him – as she put her hands on the back of the father’s head and bade him spare Gregor’s life” (48-49).

**15**

“And now if Gregor, because of his wound, had, probably forever, lost his mobility and, like an old invalid, currently needed many, many minutes to cross the room – crawling up in the air was unthinkable – he received what, in his opinion, was entirely sufficient compensation for this worsening of his condition. In the evenings the living room door, that he only two hours previously had been in the habit of closely observing, would be opened so that he, lying in the darkness of his room, could, without being seen from the living room, see the entire family at the illuminated table” (51).

**16**

“Gregor fully understood that it was not only consideration for him that forestalled a move, because one could easily transport him in a suitable box with a few air holes, but it was much more the complete hopelessness and the thought that they had experienced a stroke of bad luck unlike any known in their entire circle of family and friends” (53).

**17**

“The father appeared to consider it more important to calm the tenants than to drive away Gregor, despite the fact that the tenants were hardly upset and that Gregor entertained them more than the violin performance” (60).

**18**

“‘Dearest parents,’ said the sister as she struck the table with her hand as an introduction, ‘this can go no further. If you perhaps don’t recognize that, I recognize it. I will not pronounce the name of my brother in the presence of this monster, and will say merely this about it: we must be rid of it’” (61).