



Contradiction, Confusion and Difference

Extract A

What might we learn from Kafka about the effects difference has on individuals within society?

But his father was not in the mood to observe such niceties. 'Ah,' he yelled as soon as he entered, with a tone as if he were all at once angry and pleased. Gregor pulled his head back from the door and raised it in the direction of his father. He had not really pictured his father as he now stood there. Of course, what with his new style of creeping all around, he had in the past while neglected to pay attention to what was going on in the rest of the apartment, as he had done before, and really should have grasped the fact that he would encounter different conditions. Nevertheless, nevertheless, was that still his father? **Was that the same man who had lain exhausted and buried in bed in earlier days when Gregor was setting out on a business trip, who had received him on the evenings of his return in a sleeping gown and arm chair, totally incapable of standing up, who had only lifted his arm as a sign of happiness, and who in their rare strolls together a few Sundays a year and on the important holidays made his way slowly forwards between Gregor and his mother (who themselves moved slowly), always a bit more slowly than them, bundled up in his old coat, all the time setting down his walking stick carefully, and who, when he had wanted to say something, almost always stood still and gathered his entourage around him?**

But now he was standing up really straight, dressed in a tight fitting blue uniform with gold buttons, like the ones servants wear in a banking company. Above the high stiff collar of his jacket his firm double chin stuck out prominently, beneath his bushy eyebrows the glance of his black eyes was freshly penetrating and alert, his otherwise disheveled white hair was combed down into a carefully exact shining part. He threw his cap, on which a gold monogram (apparently the symbol of the bank) was affixed, in an arc across the entire room onto the sofa and moved, throwing back the edge of the long coat of his uniform, with his hands in his trouser pockets and a grim face, right up to Gregor.

Tasks

- 1) Read Extract A. Underline any phrases that show Gregor's confusion.
- 2) Why might Gregor be confused? Use a quotation to support your answer.
- 3) The quotation below is an **oxymoron** (or is **oxymoronic**). Why might his father appear 'angry and pleased'? How does the language support your ideas?

'Ah,' he yelled as soon as he entered, with a tone as if he were all at once angry and pleased.

- 4) Re-read the section of the extract that is in bold. How might the use of the punctuation affect our understanding of Gregor's confusion?
- 5) How do the two contrasting descriptions of Gregor's father affect the reader's understanding of his character?
- 6) What might we learn from Kafka about the effects difference has on individuals within society?