



Unhealthy Mindsets

How far can Gregor's view of his transformation be considered unhealthy?

TASKS

- 1) Read through Extract A. As you read, underline any words and/or phrases that show Gregor feels he is intimidating.
- 2) Why does Gregor hide beneath a sheet when his sister enters the room? Find a quotation to support your answer.
- 3) How does Kafka present Gregor's feelings about his appearance? Use quotations and analyse language in your answer.
- 4) Look at the quotation below. What does it tell us about Gregor's perception of himself?

'From this he realised that his appearance was still constantly intolerable to her and must remain intolerable in future'

- 5) Read through Extract B. How does Kafka present the mother's lack of understanding towards Gregor's current state? Use a quotation to support your answer.
- 6) What might Kafka be telling us about the psychological effects feeling different might have within our society? Use examples from the text to support your answer.
- 7) How far can Gregor's view of his transformation be considered unhealthy?

Extract A

On one occasion (about one month had already gone by since Gregor's transformation, and there was now no particular reason any more for his sister to be startled at Gregor's appearance) she came a little earlier than usual and came upon Gregor as he was still looking out the window, immobile and well positioned to frighten someone. It would not have come as a surprise to Gregor if she had not come in, since his position was preventing her from opening the window immediately. But she not only did not step inside; she even retreated and shut the door. A stranger really could have concluded from this that Gregor had been lying in wait for her and wanted to bite her. Of course, Gregor immediately concealed himself under the couch, but he had to wait until the noon meal before his sister returned, and she seemed much less calm than usual. From this he realised that his appearance was still constantly intolerable to her and must remain intolerable in future, and that she really had to exert a lot of self-control not to run away from a glimpse of only the small part of his body which stuck out from under the couch. In order to spare her even this sight, one day he dragged the sheet on his back onto the couch (this task took him four hours) and arranged it in such a way that he was now completely concealed and his sister, even if she bent down, could not see him. If this sheet was not necessary as far as she was concerned, then she could remove it, for it was clear enough that Gregor could not derive any pleasure from isolating himself away so completely. But she left the sheet just as it was, and Gregor believed he even caught a look of gratitude when on one occasion he carefully lifted up the sheet a little with his head to check as his sister took stock of the new arrangement.

Extract B

'And is it not the case,' his mother concluded very quietly, almost whispering as if she wished to prevent Gregor, whose exact location she really didn't know, from hearing even the sound of her voice (for she was convinced that he did not understand her words), 'and isn't it a fact that by removing the furniture we're showing that we're giving up all hope of an improvement and are leaving him to his own resources without any consideration? I think it would be best if we tried to keep the room exactly in the condition in which it was before, so that, when Gregor returns to us, he finds everything unchanged and can forget the intervening time all the more easily.'