



11<sup>th</sup> AP Grade Summer Reading and Questions

Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka – Please buy the Bantam edition (isbn: 0553213695) so we can follow along in class together.

The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams – Please buy the edition with the isbn: 9780811214049, so we can follow along in class together.

**We ask that students please have their own copies of the books, and not use the library, so that they can have a book to use (and annotate) in class.**

Discussion Questions for Metamorphosis

**FRANZ KAFKA (1883-1924) *THE METAMORPHOSIS* (1912)**

**German-Jewish writer from Czechoslovakia -- Modern Existentialist Thinker**

1. What autobiographical elements are contained in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*?
2. What is Gregor Samsa's "identity crisis"?
3. Discuss the theme of "isolation" in *Metamorphosis*.
4. How does *The Metamorphosis* illustrate the following maxim: "The more you do for someone, the more that someone takes you for granted."
5. What is the source of Gregor Samsa's condemnation to a life as an insect or bug (vermin)?
6. What mistaken beliefs does Gregor hold concerning his family?
7. Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis goes hand in hand with a description of the world around him as he sees it in his new state. Give some specific illustrations of this.

8. What is the relationship between Gregor and his family? What clues in the story suggest that his relationship with his family, particularly his father, is unsatisfactory?
9. Discuss the central events in each of the three sections of the story. In what ways do these events suggest that the weakening of Gregor results in the strengthening of the family as a whole?
10. What is the significance of the minor characters in the story—the manager, the three boarders, and the cleaning women?
11. What is the importance of the final scene in the story, the family’s trip to the country? Why is it written so lyrically in comparison to the rest of the text which is presented in more of an “objective” journalistic style?
12. How does the apparent disjunction between tone and event create humor in *The Metamorphosis*?
13. What significance is attached to food in *The Metamorphosis*?

#### Discussion Questions for The Glass Menagerie

##### Scenes 1&2

1. What is the effect of the actors eating without food or utensils at the beginning of the play?
2. What is the importance of Blue Mountain for Amanda? How is this important in the play as a whole?
3. Do you sense any early conflict between Amanda and Tom? What is the source of this conflict?
4. What’s the purpose of introducing the idea of Laura’s old high school love interest at this point?

5. Sum up the situations at the end of scene 2 in terms of those themes or conflicts that are important for the play as a whole.

#### Scenes 3&4

1. What's the significance of our seeing Amanda on the phone selling subscriptions at the beginning of scene 3?
2. Why is Amanda especially angry at Tom's drinking?
3. What's the point of their conflict over the books Tom reads?
4. What's the point of Tom's making up the stories about himself?
5. We see at the beginning of scene 4 a dramatization of Tom's drinking. What is the significance to his story of Malvolio the Magician?
6. What different attitudes toward humanity do Tom and Amanda express when they discuss things like instinct and spirit? Does the play as a whole suggest that one of them is right?

#### Scene 5

1. How much time has passed between the previous scenes and this scene? What's the purpose of this skip in time?
2. What does it tell us about Amanda that as soon as she hears there is to be a gentleman caller she starts to quiz Tom about whether he drinks, what his nationality is, etc?
3. Who is right, Amanda or Tom, in their discussion of Laura? Discuss.
4. What does Amanda's concern for the moon and wishing on it tell us about her?

## Scene 6

1. What do the changes in the set and the dress of the characters tell us?
2. What's the significance of the description of Laura, especially "a piece of translucent glass touched by light . . . not actual"?
3. What's the point of Amanda's near-monologue about her past?
4. What's the point of having the gentleman caller be someone Laura knew in the past? What does this add to the situation?
5. What do you suppose our reaction as an audience is supposed to be when we see Amanda come out in her old southern dress with all her southern charm? Are we supposed to laugh at her, sympathize with her, or what?
6. Are we prepared for Laura's reaction of getting sick, not being able to answer the door, etc? Explain.

## Scene 7

1. Is it plausible that someone so painfully shy can actually get involved as she does with Jim in this scene? If you think so, consider the elements that make it plausible.
2. What is the significance of Jim's old name for Laura – Blue Roses?
3. How accurate is Jim's analysis of Laura's problems? How do you judge Jim as he is saying all this? Is he cruel? Understanding? Does the tone of his remarks tell us anything about him?
4. What's the significance of the glass menagerie and in particular the unicorn? What is the significance of the unicorn losing its horn?
5. Is Jim leading her on, or does he experience sincere feelings? How do you know?

6. Look at Amanda's statement to Tom about his living in a dream. Would this apply to her too? How so?