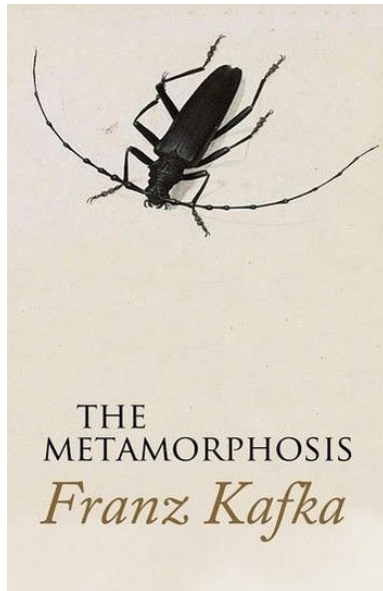


For this book club meeting, we experimented with genres and styles as we chose two quite different books to read: 'Metamorphosis' written by Franz Kafka and 'V for Vendetta' written by Alan Moore and illustrated by David Lloyd.



Frank Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1915) tells the story of a salesman called Gregor Samsa who wakes up one morning and finds himself transformed into a huge insect. Gregor's whole life revolves around his job even though he hates it because his family depends on him financially, so instead of worrying over this new condition of his body, he's concerned with how to continue working and providing for his family.

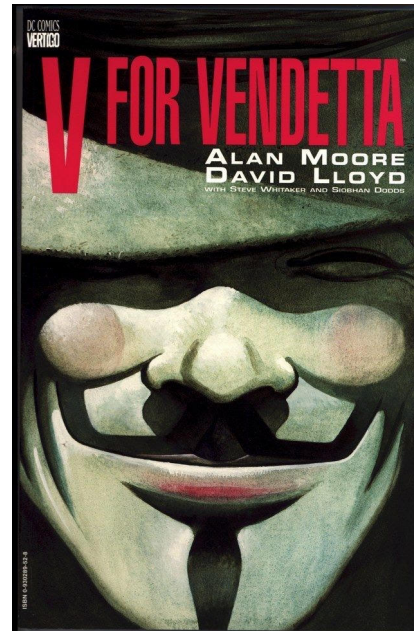
Gregor's physical transformation is the obvious metamorphosis in the story but Kafka also writes about the transfiguration of Gregor's mind; him slowly losing touch with his humane, past self and his parents and sister who find it hard to accept their son/brother for what he is in his current state. As the story unravels, Gregor becomes more and more detached and alienated from his family members and his past self, and they too gradually stop caring and start seeing Gregor as nothing but a burden.

Hidden theme of Kafka's allegorical tale is the suffering of individuals who try to find and express their true identity in a society centered around impassioned, all-consuming obligations and careers to chase in order to attain success. To achieve the state of absurdity surrounding the tale and Kafka's usual, surreal style of writing, he couples the story with bold language and diction, strange and seemingly unnecessary details and descriptions, as well as vivid imagery and some other figures of speech.

*V for Vendetta* by Alan Moore (1982) is a graphic novel set in an alternate dystopian timeline where the United Kingdom is taken over by a fascist government in the wake of a destructive war. The story follows an anarchist freedom fighter only known as 'V' as he constructs elaborate schemes to take down the government. He is aided in his efforts by a young woman named Evey, who he saves and who eventually becomes his protégé.

The graphic novel puts the focus on the need for freedom and change, and shows that if people do not think and act for themselves, they will inevitably be controlled. It was compelling to read and was heavily driven by the characters, who were well rounded and versatile. However, some of the members of the book club had a hard time following the story because of its comic format and use of colloquial language, while others liked it for its complex plot.

Members of the book club voted and the majority preferred Kafka's *Metamorphosis* because they are more familiar with regular novels than graphic ones like *V for Vendetta* but it really just depends on what you personally like. The two of us preferred Alan Moore's *V* over *Metamorphosis* but we highly recommend both, so read them and find out which one suits you better!



Mia & Anja