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**NOTES**

**MA 3<sup>RD</sup> SEM**

**Sub:- EUROPEAN FICTION**

## UNIT 1

### Madame Bovary By Gustave Flaubert:

**Madame Bovary: Provincial Manners:** Madame Bovary : Mœurs de province commonly known as simply Madame Bovary, is the début novel of French writer Gustave Flaubert, originally published in 1856 and 1857. The eponymous character, Emma Bovary, lives beyond her means in order to escape the ennui of provincial life.

When the novel was first serialised in *Revue de Paris* between 1 October and 15 December 1856, public prosecutors attacked the novel for obscenity. The resulting trial in January 1857 made the story notorious. Following Flaubert's acquittal on 7 February 1857, Madame Bovary became a bestseller in April 1857 when it was published in two volumes. A seminal work of literary realism, the novel is now considered ranked Flaubert's masterpieces, and one of the most influential literary works in history.

#### Plot

By Charles Léandre Madame Bovary, engraved by Eugène Decisy [fr]. Emma in male costume at the ball)

Charles Bovary is a shy, oddly dressed teenager who becomes an Officier de santé in the Public Health Service. He marries the woman his mother has chosen for him, the unpleasant but supposedly rich widow Héloïse Dubuc. He sets out to build a practice in the village of Tostes.

One day, Charles visits a local farm to set the owner's broken leg and meets his patient's daughter, Emma Rouault. Emma is a beautiful, poetically dressed young woman who has a yearning for luxury and romance inspired by reading popular novels. Charles is immediately attracted to her, and when Héloïse dies, Charles waits a decent interval before courting Emma in earnest. Her father gives his consent, and Emma and Charles marry.

Emma finds her married life dull and becomes listless. Charles decides his wife needs a change of scenery and moves his practice to the larger market town of Yonville. There, Emma gives birth to a daughter, Berthe, but motherhood proves a disappointment to Emma. She becomes infatuated with Léon Dupuis, a law student who shares Emma's appreciation for literature and music. Emma does not acknowledge her passion for Léon, who departs for Paris to continue his studies.

Next, Emma begins an affair with a rich and rakish landowner, Rodolphe Boulanger. After four years, she insists they run away together. Rodolphe does not share her enthusiasm for this plan and on the eve of their planned departure, he ends the relationship with a letter placed at the bottom of a basket of apricots delivered to Emma. The shock is so great that Emma falls deathly ill and returns to religion.

When Emma recovers, she and Charles attend the opera, at Charles' insistence, in nearby Rouen. The opera reawakens Emma's passions, and she re-encounters Léon who, now educated and working in Rouen, is also attending the opera. They begin an affair. Emma indulges her fancy for luxury goods and clothes with purchases made on credit from the merchant Lheureux, who arranges for her to obtain power of attorney over Charles' estate.

When Lheureux calls in Bovary's debt, Emma pleads for money from several people, only to be turned down. In despair, she swallows arsenic and dies an agonizing death. Charles, heartbroken, abandons himself to grief, stops working, and lives by selling off his possessions. When he dies, his young daughter Berthe is placed with her grandmother, who soon dies. Berthe lives with an impoverished aunt, who sends her to work in a cotton mill. The book concludes with the local pharmacist Homais, who had competed with Charles' medical practice, gaining prominence among Yonville people and being rewarded for his medical achievements.

## Characters

**Emma Bovary** is the novel's eponymous protagonist. She has a highly romanticized view of the world and craves beauty, wealth, passion, as well as high society.

**Charles Bovary**, Emma's husband, is a very simple and common man. He is an officier de santé, or "health officer".

**Rodolphe Boulanger** is a wealthy local man who seduces Emma as one in a long string of mistresses.

**Léon Dupuis** is a clerk who introduces Emma to poetry and who falls in love with her.

**Monsieur Lheureux** is a sly merchant who lends money to Charles and leads the Bovarys into debt and financial ruin.

**Monsieur Homais** is the town pharmacist.

**Justin** is Monsieur Homais' apprentice and second cousin who harbors a crush on Emma.

## Style

The book was in some ways inspired by the life of a schoolfriend of the author who became a doctor. Flaubert's friend and mentor, Louis Bouilhet, had suggested to him that this might be a suitably "down-to-earth" subject for a novel and that Flaubert should attempt to write in a "natural way," without digressions. The writing style was of supreme importance to Flaubert. While writing the novel, he wrote that it would be "a book about nothing, a book dependent on nothing external, which would be held together by the internal strength of its style". an aim which, for the critic Jean Rousset, made Flaubert "the first in date of the non-figurative novelists", such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. Though Flaubert avowed no liking for the style of Balzac, the novel he produced became arguably a prime example and an enhancement of literary realism in the vein of Balzac. The "realism" in the novel was to prove an important element in the trial for obscenity: the lead prosecutor argued that not only was the novel immoral, but that realism in literature was an offence against art and decency.

The realist movement was, in part, a reaction against romanticism. Emma may be said to be the embodiment of a romantic: in her mental and emotional process, she has no relation to the realities of her world. Although in some ways he may seem to identify with Emma. Flaubert frequently mocks her romantic daydreaming and taste in literature. The accuracy of Flaubert's supposed assertion that "Madame Bovary, has been questioned. In his letters, he distanced himself from the sentiments in the novel. To Edma Roger des Genettes, he wrote, all that I love is not there and to Marie-Sophie Leroyer de Chantepie, have used nothing of my feelings or of my life". For Mario Vargas Llosa, "If Emma Bovary had not read all those novels, it is possible that her fate might have been different.

Madame Bovary has been seen as a commentary on the bourgeoisie, the folly of aspirations that can never be realized or a belief in the validity of a self-satisfied, deluded personal culture, associated with Flaubert's period, especially during the reign of Louis Philippe, when the middle class grew to become more identifiable in contrast to the working class and the nobility. Flaubert despised the bourgeoisie. In his Dictionary of Received Ideas, the bourgeoisie is characterized by intellectual and spiritual superficiality, raw ambition, shallow culture, a love of material things, greed, and above all a mindless parroting of sentiments and beliefs.

For Vargas Llosa, "Emma's drama is the gap between illusion and reality, the distance between desire and its fulfillment" and shows "the first signs of alienation that a century later will take hold of men and women in industrial societies.

## Literary significance and reception

Long established as one of the greatest novels, the book has been described as a "perfect" work of fiction.[citation needed] Henry James wrote: "Madame Bovary has a perfection that not only stamps it, but that makes it stand almost alone: it holds itself with such a supreme unapproachable assurance as both excites and defies judgment. Marcel Proust praised the "grammatical purity" of Flaubert's style, while Vladimir Nabokov said that "stylistically it is prose doing what poetry is supposed to do". Similarly, in his preface to his novel *The Joke*, Milan Kundera wrote, "not until the work of Flaubert did prose lose the stigma of aesthetic inferiority. Ever since *Madame Bovary*, the art of the novel has been considered equal to the art of poetry. Giorgio de Chirico said that in his opinion "from the narrative point of view, the most perfect book is *Madame Bovary* by Flaubert". Julian Barnes called it the best novel that has ever been written.

The novel exemplifies the tendency of realism, over the course of the nineteenth century, to become increasingly psychological, concerned with the accurate representation of thoughts and emotions rather than of external things. Thus it prefigures the work of modernist novelists Marcel Proust, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce.

The book was controversial upon its release: its scandalous subject matter led to an obscenity trial in 1857. Flaubert was acquitted. *Le Figaro* was negative of the work. They stated, "Monsieur Flaubert is not a writer.

## UNIT 2

### Tin Drum By Gunter Grass

*The Tin Drum* is a 1959 novel by German author Gunter Grass. In the novel, a man named Oskar tells the story of his life, particularly focusing on his experiences during World War II. The novel employs satire, absurdism, magical realism, and allegory to wrestle with the pain and trauma of life under Nazi rule. *The Tin Drum* was adapted into an Oscar-winning film in 1979 and has been hailed as a landmark in literary fiction. In 1999, Grass was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

This guide uses an eBook version of the 2009 Vintage Classics edition, translated by Breon Mitchell.

**Content Warning:** The source material contains sometimes graphic depictions of political, domestic, and sexual violence, implied pedophilia, and death by suicide.

### Plot

**Oskar Matzerath** is a patient in a psychiatric hospital, which is referred to in the text as a "mental institution" (9). He begins to write his autobiography using supplies given to him by his keeper, Bruno. Oskar begins with the story of how his grandparents met. Anna Bronski is a potato seller who hides a fleeing arsonist named Joseph Koljaiczek beneath her many skirts. While under her skirts, he impregnates her and the couple marry. Anna gives birth to Oskar's mother Agnes, but Joseph goes missing when he is forced to run from the police. Agnes falls in love with her cousin, Jan, as well as an injured soldier named Alfred, who she nurses back to health during World War I. Agnes eventually marries Alfred while Jan marries a woman named Hedwig. When Agnes becomes pregnant, she is never sure whether Alfred or Jan is the father. Even after Oskar is born, Jan and Agnes continue their sexual relationship.

Oskar is born with a fully developed adult mind. He remembers his birth in meticulous detail. When he overhears Alfred talking about Oskar's future as a greengrocer, he is annoyed. He considers returning to the womb but the promise of a tin drum from Agnes convinces him not to do so. As a compromise, he decides that he will not grow any more after his third birthday. To the outside world, Oskar appears like a child. He carries a tin drum with him everywhere and plays it constantly, using it to communicate and conserve his memories. In the future, playing a tin drum will help Oskar explore his memories.

Oskar and his family live in the free city of Danzig. When the Nazis take power in Germany, they invade Poland and take over Danzig. Oskar witnesses antisemitic violence firsthand, such as the destruction of Jewish-owned shops and violence against Jewish people on Kristallnacht. However, he is more concerned with regularly replacing his beloved tin drums.

Oskar discovers that his voice can shatter glass. He uses this ability to break windows and cause mayhem in Danzig. When he is still young, Agnes dies of fish poisoning. Alfred joins the Nazi Party while Jan reaffirms his Polish identity by working for the Polish Post Office. When German soldiers attack the Post Office, Jan helps his fellow workers defend the building. They are eventually overwhelmed, and Oskar is complicit in Jan being taken away and executed by the Germans. He struggles with his guilt regarding Jan's death.

Alfred hires a girl named Maria to work in his grocery store. Oskar falls in love with Maria and, as he begins to explore his burgeoning sexuality, he convinces himself that he has impregnated her. She is also in a sexual relationship with Alfred. When she gives birth to Kurt, Oskar is convinced that the boy is his son even though Maria is now Alfred's wife. Frustrated, Oskar begins a sexual relationship with a neighbor named Frau Greff, whose pedophilic husband eventually takes his own life.

Oskar leaves home to work in a travelling performance group run by his friend Bebra. The group performs for soldiers on the front lines. After he sees a German soldier execute nuns in Normandy, however, Oskar returns to Danzig. He becomes the leader of a gang of children named the Dusters, but they are caught when they deface a statue in a church. At the end of World War II, Russians enter Danzig and terrorize the local people. Oskar and his family are held hostage in the basement while the Russians loot their house. Oskar hands Alfred a pin with a Nazi insignia, which Alfred fears will mark him for execution if discovered. Alfred swallows the pin, which catches in his throat. The Russians shoot him as he chokes to death.

Oskar, Maria, and Kurt go to live in Dusseldorf. Oskar flits between jobs, working as a stonemason and a model. He moves into his own apartment and meets a musician named Klepp. They agree to start a jazz band together. At the same time, he becomes obsessed with a neighbor named Sister Dorothea. Oskar becomes a successful musician, but fame and money do not make him happy. While walking a rented dog, he finds a severed finger. He meets a man named Vittlar and eventually convinces Vittlar to report the severed finger to the police. Oskar is arrested for murder and placed in the psychiatric hospital, even though he knows that he is innocent. He worries that he will be released soon, as he craves punishment for the mistakes of his past.

## **Style**

Oskar Matzerath is an unreliable narrator, as his sanity, or insanity, never becomes clear. He tells the tale in first person, though he occasionally diverts to third person, sometimes within the same sentence. As an unreliable narrator, he may contradict himself within his autobiography, as with his varying accounts of, but not exclusively, the Defense of the Polish Post Office, his grandfather Koljaiczek's fate, his paternal status over Kurt, Maria's son, and many others.

The novel is strongly political in nature, although it goes beyond a political novel in the writing's stylistic plurality. There are elements of allegory, myth and legend, placing it in the genre of magic realism.

The Tin Drum has religious overtones, both Jewish and Christian. Oskar holds conversations with both Jesus and Satan throughout the book. His gang members call him "Jesus", and he refers to himself as "Satan" later in the book.

## **Adaptations**

### **Film**

*In 1979 a film adaptation appeared by Volker Schlöndorff. It covers only Books One and Two, concluding at the end of the war. It shared the 1979 Cannes Film Festival Palme d'Or with Apocalypse Now. It also won the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film of 1979 at the 1980 Academy Awards.*

## Radio

*In 1996 a radio dramatisation starring Phil Daniels was broadcast by BBC Radio 4. Adapted by Mike Walker, it won the British Writers Guild award for best dramatisation.*

## Theatre

*The Kneehigh Theatre company performed an adaption of the novel in 2017 at the Everyman Theatre located in Liverpool. The production features the story from Oskar's birth through the war, ending with Oskar marrying Maria.[citation needed]*

## In popular culture

*The Onion Cellar, a play by Amanda Palmer and Brian Viglione of The Dresden Dolls with the American Repertory Theater, is based on a chapter in The Tin Drum.*

*Return to the Onion Cellar: A Dark Rock Musical, an original musical premiered in 2010 at the New York International Fringe Festival, references The Tin Drum and Günter Grass.*

*The futurist band Japan named their final studio album Tin Drum.*

*The tin drum is featured in Season 2 of the Starz TV series Counterpart. Emily Silk is seen carrying it around as she attempts to recover her memory following an attempted assassination.*

*In the series finale of Key and Peele, The Tin Drum is listed as one of the movies that Ray Parker Jr. wrote a song for on his greatest hits album.*

*The Tin Drum is a book in the home bookcase in the film Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf.*

## UNIT 3

### The Outsider by Albert Camus

- The Outsider, as written above, covers the story of Meursault who sees the world slightly differently from others. Back when this was written there may not have been a diagnosis for it, however, these days it would likely be considered a form of psychopathy or simply high-level autism. With his ability to socialise and perform everyday tasks, I would say it borders more on being a psychopath. You see, Meursault doesn't seem to feel the loss after his mother's funeral. He's noted by other people to have not cried and then to have been seen swimming jauntily in the sea mere days after. He doesn't understand why he didn't cry but he says he's not sure when is right to cry.
- The book is a novella, coming in at just over 110 pages. Accompanied with this, Camus writes it in a very blunt and short-sentenced way. I've not read Camus' other books but I would say it has been written like this to add to the element of our main character's psychotic state and his inability to form deep thoughts or emotions about things. Life simply goes by and he's simply there to watch it and partake.
- The Outsider is one of those books that explores different themes. It explores the idea of a lack of understanding of why someone can feel no sadness for his mother's passing and have no remorse upon killing a man and yet still be a "good man". We read throughout the book of Meursault feeling bad for his neighbour's dog whom his neighbour abuses, we read of him enjoying the company of his fling throughout but when asked by her if he loves her he suggests he doesn't think so, but would still marry her when she asks.
- There's a big question of the support Meursault would have received today as opposed to back then and how the case may have been treated differently. You'd argue he may well be given a different sentence as we have

a better understanding of these sorts of mental states these days. There's a lot to think about whilst reading this book which is why I enjoyed it.

Now, this is a very interesting one as I often say that I rate characters highly in a book when they either have me physically laughing or they have a trait that makes me fall in love (they're incredibly kind, they have a comeback story or they're intelligent for example). However, in *The Outsider*, our main character Meursault is a fascinating character in a different way. Whether intentionally or not, Albert Camus has written a character here who not only struggles to translate emotions but also has clear lack of connection with people. There are many moments where he actively notes that he doesn't have feelings either way for people and has to internally discuss whether now that he has performed certain actions whether that changes his relationship status with someone.

- This with the additional factor that the supporting characters around him are all so vivid makes the very few characters in this book all very unforgettable. His "friend" and neighbour is a man who is clearly a tad mean with a bad temper but treated Meursault well so he allows them to be friends. His girlfriend is someone with whom he enjoys spending time and kissing so he decides he would say yes if she asked him to marry her despite not being sure if he loves her. She takes this to mean he isn't sure if he's there yet emotionally, yet he means he is literally not sure what love feels like. It's really interesting.

*The Outsider* could easily have received a higher rating as it was a book that very much made me think. It felt like one of these books you'd discuss for weeks in your English class. The characters are interesting, the plot moves at a break-neck pace to allow for more to happen in its minimal page count and it has you coming away with plenty of questions as to the author's intentions. However, it just lacked any real excitement for me, which kept it from being a true five-star read.

## UNIT 4

### **The Trial By Franz Kafka:**

*The Trial* (German: *Der Prozess*)[a] is a novel written by Franz Kafka in 1914 and 1915 and published posthumously on 26 April 1925. One of his best-known works, it tells the story of Josef K., a man arrested and prosecuted by a remote, inaccessible authority, with the nature of his crime revealed neither to him nor to the reader. Heavily influenced by Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, Kafka even went so far as to call Dostoevsky a blood relative. Like Kafka's two other novels, *The Castle* and *Amerika*, *The Trial* was never completed, although it does include a chapter that appears to bring the story to an intentionally abrupt ending.

After Kafka's death in 1924, his friend and literary executor Max Brod edited the text for publication by Verlag Die Schmiede. The original manuscript is held at the Museum of Modern Literature, Marbach am Neckar, Germany. The first English-language translation, by Willa and Edwin Muir, was published in 1937. In 1999, the book was listed in *Le Monde's* 100 Books of the Century and as No. 2 of the Best German Novels of the Twentieth Century.

Kafka drafted the opening sentence of *The Trial* in August 1914 and worked on the novel throughout 1915. This was an unusually productive period for Kafka, despite the outbreak of World War I, which significantly increased the pressures of his day job as an insurance agent.

Having begun by writing the opening and concluding sections of the novel, Kafka worked on the intervening scenes in a haphazard manner, using several different notebooks simultaneously. His friend Max Brod, knowing Kafka's habit of destroying his own work, eventually took the manuscript for safekeeping. It consisted of 161 loose pages torn from notebooks, which Kafka had bundled together into chapters. The order of the chapters was not made clear to Brod; nor was he told which parts were complete and which were unfinished. Following Kafka's death in 1924, Brod edited the work and assembled it into a novel to the best of his ability.

**Plot:**

On the morning of his thirtieth birthday, Josef K., the chief clerk of a bank, is unexpectedly arrested by two agents from an unidentified agency for an unspecified crime. The agents discuss the situation with Josef in the unoccupied room of his fellow lodger Fräulein Bürstner, in the unexplained presence of three junior clerks from Josef's bank. Josef is not imprisoned, but left free to go about his business. His landlady, Frau Grubach, tries to console Josef about the trial. He visits Bürstner to explain the events, and then harasses her by kissing her without consent.

Josef finds that Fräulein Montag, a lodger from another room, has moved in with Fräulein Bürstner. He suspects that this is a coy manoeuvre meant to distance him from Bürstner, and resolves that she will eventually fall for his charms.

Josef is summoned to appear at the court's address the coming Sunday, without being told the time or location. After a period of exploration he finds the court in the attic of a dilapidated working-class tenement block, at the back of a young washerwoman's home. Josef is rebuked for his lateness and mistaken for a house painter rather than a bank clerk. He arouses the assembly's hostility after a passionate plea about the absurdity of the trial and the falseness of the accusation, despite still not knowing the charges. The proceedings are interrupted by a man sexually assaulting the washerwoman in a corner. Josef notices that all the assembly members are wearing pins on their lapels which he interprets as signifying their membership of a secret organisation.

The following Sunday Josef goes to the courtroom again, but the court is not in session. The washerwoman gives him information about the process and attempts to seduce him before a law student, the man who assaulted her the previous week, takes her away, claiming her to be his mistress. The woman's husband, a court usher, then takes Josef on a tour of the court offices, which ends after Josef becomes extremely weak in the presence of other court officials and defendants.

One evening, in a storage room at his own bank, Josef discovers the two agents who arrested him being whipped for soliciting bribes from Josef, which he had complained about at court. Josef tries to argue with the flogger, saying that the men need not be whipped, but the flogger cannot be swayed. The next day he returns to the storage room and is shocked to find everything as he had found it the day before, including the whipper and the two agents.

Josef is visited by his uncle Karl, who lives in the country. Worried by the rumors about his nephew, Karl introduces Josef to Herr Huld, a sickly and bedridden lawyer tended to by Leni, a young woman who shows an immediate attraction to Josef. During a conversation between Karl and Huld about Josef's case, Leni calls Josef away for a sexual encounter. Afterwards, Josef meets his angry uncle outside, who claims that Josef's lack of respect for the advocate, by leaving the meeting and romantically engaging with the woman who is apparently Huld's mistress, has hurt his case.

Josef has become increasingly preoccupied by his case, to the detriment of his work. He has further meetings with Huld, and continues to engage in discreet trysts with Leni, but the advocate's work appears to be having no effect on the proceedings. At the bank, one of Josef's clients recommends he seek the advice of Titorelli, the court's official painter. Titorelli outlines the options he can help Josef pursue: indefinite postponement of the process, or a temporary acquittal that could at any point result in re-arrest. Unequivocal acquittal is not a viable option.

Suspicious of the advocate's motives and the apparent lack of progress, Josef finally decides to dismiss Huld and take control of matters himself. Upon arriving at Huld's office, he meets a downtrodden merchant, Rudi Block, who offers Josef some insight from a fellow defendant's perspective. Block's case has continued for five years and he has gone from being a successful businessman to being almost bankrupt and is virtually enslaved by his dependence on the lawyer and Leni, with whom he appears to be sexually involved. The lawyer mocks Block in front of Josef for his dog-like subservience. This experience further poisons Josef's opinion of his lawyer.

Josef is put in charge of accompanying an important Italian client to the city's cathedral, but the client never meets him there. While inside the cathedral, a priest calls Josef by name and tells him a fable (which was published earlier as "Before the Law") that is meant to explain his situation. The priest tells Josef that the parable is an ancient text of the court, and many generations of court officials have interpreted it differently.

On the eve of Josef's thirty-first birthday, two men arrive at his apartment. The three walk through the city, and Josef catches a brief glimpse of Fräulein Bürstner. They arrive at a small quarry outside the city, and the men kill Josef, stabbing him in the heart with a butcher's knife while strangling him. Josef summarizes his situation with his last words: "Like a dog!".

### **Who Was Franz Kafka?**

Author Franz Kafka grew up in an upper middle-class Jewish family. After studying law at the University of Prague, he worked in insurance and wrote in the evenings. In 1923, he moved to Berlin to focus on writing, but died of tuberculosis shortly after. His friend Max Brod published most of his work posthumously, such as *Amerika* and *The Castle*.

### **Early Years**

Writer Franz Kafka was the eldest son of an upper middle-class Jewish family who was born on July 3, 1883, in Prague, the capital of Bohemia, a kingdom that was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Tragedy shaped the Kafka home. Franz's two younger brothers, Georg and Heinrich, died in infancy by the time Kafka was six, leaving the boy the only son in a family that included three daughters (all of whom would later die in Nazi death camps or a Polish ghetto).

Kafka had a difficult relationship with both of his parents. His mother, Julie, was a devoted homemaker who lacked the intellectual depth to understand her son's dreams to become a writer. Kafka's father, Hermann, had a forceful personality that often overwhelmed the Kafka home. He was a success in business, making his living retailing men's and women's clothes.

Kafka's father had a profound impact on both Kafka's life and writing. He was a tyrant of sorts, with a wicked temper and little appreciation for his son's creative side. Much of Kafka's personal struggles, in romance and other relationships, came, he believed, in part from his complicated relationship with his father. In his literature, Kafka's characters were often coming up against an overbearing power of some kind, one that could easily break the will of men and destroy their sense of self-worth.

Kafka seems to have derived much of his value directly from to his family, in particular his father. For much of his adult life, he lived within close proximity to his parents.

### **Education**

German was his first language. In fact, despite his Czech background and Jewish roots, Kafka's identity favored German culture.

Kafka was a smart child who did well in school even at the Altstädter Staatsgymnasium, an exacting high school for the academic elite. Still, even while Kafka earned the respect of his teachers, he chafed under their control and the school's control of his life.

After high school Kafka enrolled at the Charles Ferdinand University of Prague, where intended to study chemistry but after just two weeks switched to law. The change pleased his father, and also gave Kafka the time to take classes in art and literature.

In 1906 Kafka completed his law degree and embarked on a year of unpaid work as a law clerk.

### **Work Life**

After completing his apprenticeship, Kafka found work with an Italian insurance agency in late 1907. It was a terrible fit from the start, with Kafka forced to work a tiring schedule that left little time for his writing.

He lasted at the agency a little less than a year. After turning in his resignation he quickly found a new job with the Workers' Accident Insurance Institute for the Kingdom of Bohemia.

As much as any work could, the job and his employers suited Kafka, who worked hard and became his boss's right-hand man. Kafka remained with the company until 1917, when a bout with tuberculosis forced him to take a sick leave and to eventually retire in 1922.

### **Love and Health**

At work Kafka was a popular employee, easy to socialize with and seen as somebody with a good sense of humor. But his personal life still raged with complications. His inhibitions and insecurities plagued his relationships. Twice he was engaged to marry his girlfriend, Felice Bauer, before the two finally went their separate ways in 1917.

Later, Kafka later fell in love with Dora Dymant (Diamant), who shared his Jewish roots and a preference for socialism. Amidst Kafka's increasingly dire health, the two fell in love and lived together in Berlin. Their relationship largely centered on Kafka's illnesses. For many years, even before he contracted tuberculosis, Kafka had not been well. Constantly strained and stressed, he suffered from migraines, boils, depression, anxiety and insomnia.

Kafka and Dora eventually returned to Prague. In an attempt to overcome his tuberculosis, Kafka traveled to Vienna for treatment at a sanatorium. He died in Kierling, Austria, on June 3, 1924. He was buried beside his parents in Prague's New Jewish Cemetery in Olsanske.

Works: 'The Metamorphosis,' 'The Castle' and 'Amerika' While Kafka strove to earn a living, he also poured himself into his writing work. An old friend named Max Brod would prove crucial in supporting Kafka's literary work both during his life and long after it.

Kafka's celebrity as a writer only came after his death. During his lifetime, he published just a sliver of his overall work.

His most popular and best-selling short story, "The Metamorphosis," was completed in 1912 and published in 1915. The story was written from Kafka's third-floor room, which offered a direct view of the Vltava River and its toll bridge.

"I would stand at the window for long periods," he wrote in his diary in 1912, "and was frequently tempted to amaze the toll collector on the bridge below by my plunge."

Kafka followed up "The Metamorphosis" with *Mediation*, a collection of short stories, in 1913, and "Before the Law," a parable within his novel *The Trial*, written between 1914 and 1915.

Even with his worsening health, Kafka continued to write. In 1916 he completed "The Judgment," which spoke directly about the relationship he shared with his father. Later works included "In the Penal Colony" and "A Country Doctor," both finished in 1919.

In 1924, an ill but still working Kafka finished *A Hunger Artist*, which features four stories that demonstrate the concise and lucid style that marked his writing at the end of his life.

But Kafka, still living with the demons that plagued with him self-doubt, was reluctant to unleash his work on the world. He requested that Brod, who doubled as his literary executor, destroy any unpublished manuscripts.

Fortunately, Brod did not adhere to his friend's wishes and in 1925 published *The Trial*, a dark, paranoid tale that proved to be the author's most successful novel. The story centers on the life of Joseph K., who is forced to defend himself in a hopeless court system against a crime that is never revealed to him or to the reader.

The following year, Brod released *The Castle*, which again railed against a faceless and dominating bureaucracy. In the novel, the protagonist, whom the reader knows only as K., tries to meet with the mysterious authorities who rule his village.

In 1927, the novel *Amerika* was published. The story hinges on a boy, Karl Rossmann, who is sent by his family to America, where his innocence and simplicity are exploited everywhere he travels. *Amerika* struck at the same father issues that were prevalent in so much of Kafka's other work. But the story also spoke to Kafka's love of travel books and memoirs (he adored *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*) and his longing to see the world.

In 1931, Brod published the short story "The Great Wall of China," which Kafka had originally crafted 14 years before.

### **Legacy**

Incredibly, at the time of his death Kafka's name was known only to small group of readers. It was only after he died and Max Brod went against the demands of his friend that Kafka and his work gained fame. His books garnered favor during World War II, especially, and greatly influenced German literature.

As the 1960s took shape and Eastern Europe was under the fist of bureaucratic Communist governments, Kafka's writing resonated particularly strongly with readers. So alive and vibrant were the tales that Kafka spun about man and faceless organizations that a new term was introduced into the English lexicon: "Kafkaesque."

The measure of Kafka's appeal and value as a writer was quantified in 1988, when his handwritten manuscript of *The Trial* was sold at auction for \$1.98 million, at that point the highest price ever paid for a modern manuscript.

The buyer, a West German book dealer, gushed after his purchase was finalized. "This is perhaps the most important work in 20th-century German literature," he said, "and Germany had to have it."