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# Discourse Analysis

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## HELLO EVERYONE!

The file for today is entitled **3. Critical Discourse Analysis**. Let us start:

### **Critical Discourse Analysis | Definition, Guide & Examples**

**Critical discourse analysis (or discourse analysis)** is a research method for studying written or spoken language in relation to its social context. It aims to understand how language is used in real life situations.

When you conduct discourse analysis, you might focus on:

- The purposes and effects of different types of language
- Cultural rules and conventions in communication
- How values, beliefs and assumptions are communicated
- How language use relates to its social, political and historical context

Keep these factors in mind because you are going to need them when we analyze our first short story by Franz Kafka 'The Bridge'.

Discourse analysis is a common qualitative research method in many humanities and social science disciplines, including linguistics, sociology, anthropology, psychology and cultural studies.

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### **What is discourse analysis used for?**

Conducting discourse analysis means examining how language functions and how meaning is created in different social contexts. It can be applied to any instance of written or oral language, as well as non-verbal aspects of communication such as tone and gestures.

Discourse analysis applies to written or oral language.

- Gestures: body language

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Materials that are suitable for discourse analysis include:

- Books, newspapers and periodicals
- Marketing material, such as brochures and advertisements
- Business and government documents
- Websites, forums, social media posts and comments
- Interviews and conversations

By analyzing these types of discourse, researchers aim to gain an understanding of social groups and how they communicate.

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### **How is discourse analysis different from other methods?**

Unlike linguistic approaches that focus only on the rules of language use, discourse analysis emphasizes the contextual meaning of language.

It focuses on the social aspects of communication and the ways people

use language to achieve specific effects (e.g. to build trust, to create doubt, to evoke emotions, or to manage conflict).

Instead of focusing on smaller units of language, such as sounds, words or phrases, discourse analysis is used to study larger chunks of language, such as entire conversations, texts, or collections of texts. The selected sources can be analyzed on multiple levels.

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What do we analyze when we use discourse analysis?

We focus on vocabulary, grammar, structure, genre, non-verbal communication, and conversational codes. Let us look at each item:

Critical discourse analysis	
Level of communication	What is analyzed?
Vocabulary	Words and phrases can be analyzed for ideological associations, formality, and euphemistic and metaphorical content.

When I analyze a text, I will ask you why did Kafka, for example, use this word and not that word? What effect is he trying to achieve on the reader? Are there any ideological associations with the words that he selected for his short story 'The Bridge'? Some words can be euphemistic because we need to deliver our message in a polite and proper way.

- Euphemistic: لطيف التعبير

Grammar	The way that sentences are constructed (e.g., verb tenses, active or passive construction, and the use of imperatives and questions) can reveal aspects of intended meaning.
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For example, why did the writer use the past tense rather than the simple present?

Structure	The structure of a text can be analyzed for how it creates emphasis or builds a narrative.
Genre	Texts can be analyzed in relation to the conventions and communicative aims of their genre (e.g., political speeches or tabloid newspaper articles).
Non-verbal communication	Non-verbal aspects of speech, such as tone of voice, pauses, gestures, and sounds like "um", can reveal aspects of a speaker's intentions, attitudes, and

	emotions.
<b>Conversational codes</b>	The interaction between people in a conversation, such as turn-taking, interruptions and listener response, can reveal aspects of cultural conventions and social roles.

These are the six levels that we should look at or focus on when we use discourse analysis with any text.

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### How to conduct discourse analysis

You make interpretations based on both the details of the material itself and on contextual knowledge.

There are many different approaches and techniques you can use to conduct discourse analysis, but the steps below outline the basic structure you need to follow. Following these steps can help you avoid pitfalls of confirmation bias that can cloud your analysis.

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Now, we have some steps that will help you avoid being biased and help you be more objective.

### Step 1: Define the research question and select the content of analysis

To do discourse analysis, you begin with a clearly defined research question. Once you have developed your question, select a range of material that is appropriate to answer it.

Discourse analysis is a method that can be applied both to large volumes of material and to smaller samples, depending on the aims and timescale of your research.

You want to study how a particular regime change from dictatorship to democracy has affected the public relations rhetoric of businesses in the country. You decide to examine the mission statements and marketing material of the 10 largest companies within five years of the regime change.

When you want to approach a text, you need to define the research question. Sometimes the text itself gives you the research question or it gives you a number of research questions.

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### Step 2: Gather information and theory on the context

Next, you must establish the social and historical context in which the material was produced and intended to be received. Gather factual details of when and where the content was created, who the author is, who

published it, and whom it was disseminated to.

As well as understanding the real-life context of the discourse, you can also conduct a literature review on the topic and construct a theoretical framework to guide your analysis.

You research factual information on the politics and history of the country and on the businesses you are studying. You also research theory on democratic transitions and the relationship between government and business.

In Step 2, they are elaborating on the previous example (the example about businesses).

- Whom it was disseminated to: the targeted audience (who is the audience at that time when the text was written).

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### **Step 3: Analyze the content for themes and patterns**

This step involves closely examining various elements of the material – such as words, sentences, paragraphs, and overall structure – and relating them to attributes, themes, and patterns relevant to your research question.

You analyze the selected material for wording and statements that reflect or relate to authoritarian and democratic political ideologies, including attitudes toward authority, liberal values, and popular opinion.

In this example, if your focus is on authoritarian and democratic political ideologies, your research will go in that direction.

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### **Step 4: Review your results and draw conclusions**

Once you have assigned particular attributes to elements of the material, reflect on your results to examine the function and meaning of the language used. Here, you will consider your analysis in relation to the broader context that you established earlier to draw conclusions that answer your research question.

Your analysis shows that the material published before the regime change used language that emphasized the quality and necessity of its services and products, while the material published after the shift to a democratic regime emphasized the needs and values of the consumer. You compare the results with your research on the ideology and rhetoric of the political regimes, and infer that the shifting political context shaped the communication strategies of national businesses.

The final result is to study the results of the research to examine the function and meaning of the language used. It is an evaluation of the research

you have done.

This is the end of this file. Keep these ideas in mind, especially the six levels that we have focused on.

Now, let us move to a file entitled *4. Discourse and Literature*. Actually, I'm interested in the examples of this file.

#### **Discourse**

**Discourse is written or spoken words. It is communication that describes thought through language in everyday life and literature.**

**Foucault famously defined discourse as "Systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, and courses of action, beliefs, and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak." This all-encompassing definition helps readers understand discourse on the broadest level. But, when it comes to literature, it's slightly different. It refers to speech or writing that deals with subjects formally. Sentences are longer and more complex. Readers won't find colloquialisms like slang words in formal discourse.**

Michel Foucault the French philosopher and thinker defines discourse as "Systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, and courses of action, beliefs, and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak."

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**Discourse is the dialogue in literature. It is any form of written communication, often seen through conversations between characters and descriptions of the setting. Often, these are long and detailed sentences that provide information about a character's background, the setting, or other critical information that will inform the reader's perspective.**

**Writers use discourse to tell their stories. This might be through a conversation between two characters, the narrator's description of what's going on, or simple descriptions of the setting, time period, and more. Readers can explore the different types of discourse common to literature, from novels to poems.**

**The word "discourse" comes from the Latin meaning "a running about."**

**Scholars related this to the movements of language and its natural flow. In literature, discourse is the formal arrangement of words. It refers broadly to all language and all forms of communication, written or spoken. This means small acts of communication and large, more complicated ones. There are several different types of discourse, all of which writers depend on to convey information. Explore them below.**

- Scholars = researchers

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### Types of Discourse

The four most common and commonly cited types of discourse are:

- **Narration:** the voice that presents the story to readers or listeners.
- **Exposition:** used to inform the audiences about background information. These are facts that aren't up for interpretation or seek to change the audience's mind.
- **Description:** uses images and encourages the reader to imagine experiences as if they were living them.
- **Argument:** used to try to convince another person about an idea. It uses logic and reasoning.

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There are also several other types of discourse that are also interesting to consider:

- **Expressive:** reflects what the writer is feeling or thinking. It generates ideas and is usually not concerned with facts.
- **Transactional:** is used when the writer wants to take a less-literary and more instructional or didactic approach to writing. The writer usually uses the active voice. It appears in advertisements and business meetings.
- **Poetic:** uses rhythmic language and rhyming words to appeal to the reader's emotions and convey experiences. Often uses imagery, figurative language, and other techniques familiar to poetry.
- **Didactic:** to tell someone to do something/it's like telling someone how to act, how to behave, how to think, what to think etc.

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### Examples of Discourse in Literature

#### *She Walks in Beauty* by Lord Byron

In this well-loved Byron poem, readers can find a great example of poetic discourse. It was written after Byron met his cousin, Mrs. John Wilmont. Her beauty so moved him that he immediately went home and wrote this poem about her. The poem uses iambic tetrameter throughout much of it as Byron describes the woman's awe-inspiring beauty.

*She walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;  
And all that's best of dark and bright  
Meet in her aspect and her eyes;  
Thus mellowed to that tender light  
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.*

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- Gaudy day: too bright/too shiny day

***She walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;***

He compares his cousin to the sky at night. The sky is cloudless and full of stars, so she is unique.

***And all that's best of dark and bright  
Meet in her aspect and her eyes;***

When you look at her, you see all these aspects. There is some kind of balance between darkness and brightness.

***Thus mellowed to that tender light  
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.***

She is beautiful and fair, and the brightness she possesses is not as harsh as a bright sunny day.

Here are the first few lines in which the rhyme scheme is quite clear. Byron uses rhyming words at the end of lines and devices like alliteration and similes to create memorable imagery. Words like "gaudy day denies" and "Thus mellowed to that tender light" are great examples of poetic discourse.

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### ***The Diary of Virginia Woolf***

In this example, readers can find expressive discourse. The author Virginia Woolf kept a diary, recording her personal recollections and emotions in its pages. These are examples of her own ideas, presented for their own reasons. She is not attempting to sway anyone to her point of view or make a reader feel something specific. Here is a quote from her diary:

***I enjoy almost everything. Yet I have some restless searcher in me. Why is there not a discovery in life? Something one can lay hands on and say "This is it"? My depression is a harassed feeling. I'm looking: but that's not it — that's not it. What is it? And shall I die before I find it?***

How did she feel?

She was depressed, lost, confused, restless etc.

Why did she feel restless?

She says why can't we say this is the meaning of life? Why can we just bend down our finger on that meaning of life? But that meaning of life is always out of reach.

This passage we have read from her diary is **an example of expressive discourse** because she is expressing her feelings and thoughts. She is talking about her conflict.



In these lines, she considers her emotions, tries to analyze them, and alludes to a deeper depression she can't shake off. Within expressive discourse, readers can find a writer's clear and unaltered thoughts.

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**"I Have a Dream" Speech by Martin Luther King, Jr.**

This incredibly famous speech is an example of narrative and argumentative discourse. King expresses his thoughts and those at the heart of the Civil Rights movement. He creates calls to action, hoping to inspire those listening to join him, as well as persuade those who disagree with him to change their minds. Here are a few lines:

*"In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the "unalienable Rights" of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."*

What is this speech about?

It is about promises, justice between black man and white man, equality, freedom etc.

It is an example of narrative and argumentative discourse because it's trying to argue something and convince you about the equality between all people no matter what colour they are. He is calling to action and inspiring people to join his cause.

**King's words are clear, mostly formal, and to the point. He has a specific message he's trying to spread, and he does not spend time adding in flowery language to obscure it.**

You should listen to the entire speech because it's quite inspiring.

We can go back to Romeo and Juliet later on and you can read the summary at home.

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Now, we will study together *The Bridge* by Franz Kafka and we will use the tools from discourse analysis.

I want someone to give a ten-minute presentation about the life of Franz Kafka focusing on his personality, his family, where he comes from, and his ideas, what he is interested in, what kind of life did he live, what he is remembered for etc.

**In general, what is the function of bridge?**

It is to cross from one side to another, to stand on the bridge to enjoy the

view, to connect two sides, two cities, or two countries together, to minimize the time and distances between areas etc.

**When someone feels they are a bridge, does the meaning of a bridge differ from the general function? How?**

They cannot move and they cannot do anything. It refers to exploitation i.e. you feel people take advantage of you, so it takes new perspective.

It may have a positive meaning which is helping other by connecting two sides together, but you become stuck in the middle. I'm helping people move on but I'm stuck.

So far we talked about the function of a bridge in general. We talked about if someone feels like a bridge how the word bridge takes multiple connotations, both positive and negative.

Now, **how does a bridge feel?** If you want you to write a paragraph from the perspective of a bridge, what would a bridge say if it had the ability to speak? Let us read of Kafka's perspective on the bridge.

### **The Bridge**

**Franz Kafka**

I was stiff and cold, I was a bridge, I lay over a ravine. My toes on one side, my fingers clutching the other, I had clamped myself fast into the crumbling clay. The tails of my coat fluttered at my sides. Far below brawled the icy trout stream. No tourist strayed to this impassable height, the bridge was not yet traced on any map. So I lay and waited; I could only wait. Without falling, no bridge, once spanned, can cease to be a bridge.

It was toward evening one day—was it the first, was it the thousandth? I cannot tell—my thoughts were always in confusion and perpetually moving in a circle. It was toward evening in summer, the roar of the stream had grown deeper, when I heard the sound of a human step! To me, to me. Straighten yourself, bridge, make ready, railless beams, to hold up the passenger entrusted to you. If his steps are uncertain, steady them unobtrusively, but if he stumbles show what you are made of and like a mountain god hurl him across to land.

He came, he tapped me with the iron point of his stick, then he lifted my coattails with it and put them in order upon me. He plunged the point of his stick into my bushy hair and let it lie there for a long time, forgetting me no doubt while he wildly gazed around him. But then—I was just following him in thought over mountain and valley—he jumped with both feet on the middle of my body. I shuddered with wild pain, not knowing what was happening. Who was it? A child? A dream? A wayfarer? A suicide? A tempter? A destroyer? And I turned so as to see him. A bridge to turn around! I had not yet turned quite around when I already began to fall, I

fell and in a moment I was torn and transpierced by the sharp rocks which had always gazed up at me so peacefully from the rushing water.

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Let us read the first paragraph and analyze it sentence by sentence:

I was stiff and cold, I was a bridge, I lay over a ravine. My toes on one side, my fingers clutching the other, I had clamped myself fast into the crumbling clay. The tails of my coat fluttered at my sides. Far below brawled the icy trout stream. No tourist strayed to this impassable height, the bridge was not yet traced on any map. So I lay and waited; I could only wait. Without falling, no bridge, once spanned, can cease to be a bridge.

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I was stiff and cold, I was a bridge, I lay over a ravine. My toes on one side, my fingers clutching the other, I had clamped myself fast into the crumbling clay. The tails of my coat fluttered at my sides. Far below brawled the icy trout stream.

- Stiff:

If someone or a part of their body is stiff, their muscles hurt and it is difficult for them to move.

- Ravine: a deep narrow valley with steep sides/canyon (وادي صغير منحدر)  
Beneath the bridge there is icy water.

What **figures of speech** do we have in these lines?

**Student:** alteration

**Professor:** we have a lot of **alteration**. We have **personification** (a bridge like a person who has toes and fingers).

What is the **tails of a coat**? Do coats have tails?

In the past, in the old fashion (at the time of Kafka or before) men's coats had tails two tails at the end. It was a little bit funny, but it was fashionable at that time.

\*

**No tourist strayed to this impassable height,....**

The bridge was so high and not even a tourist came nearby.

\*

**..... the bridge was not yet traced on any map.**

What does this tell you about the bridge?

It is so lonely. Nobody knows that existence. It is anonymous. It's not even on a map. It is invisible and insignificant.

\*

**So I lay and waited; I could only wait.**

Wait for what? Wait or who? For someone to find me and to pin me down

on the map to be visible. He wants to be known. He wants to be recognized. I'm only waiting and waiting and waiting for an adventurer, for an explorer, for somebody to recognize me, to recognize my function, my importance, my value, my existence etc.

We have questions about the identity. We have existential questions about what is my role. What is my function? Why am I here? What am I waiting for?

\*

**Without falling, no bridge, once spanned, can cease to be a bridge.**

Can you paraphrase? Can you analyze this sentence? What is the bridge saying to itself?

He is saying I'm not useful but I'm still here. I'm spanned in the air. I'm stuck in the air between two sides. I'm still here over the river. It's true nobody recognizes me. It's true that I don't exist on the map, but I'm still a bridge and I have not fallen. It is waiting for recognition. I'm not existent in the eyes of others but I'm existent in my eyes.

**What kind of discourse do we have in this paragraph?** Do we have description, narration, expository, or argumentation discourse ?

**We have description and narration discourse.**

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The second paragraph:

**It was toward evening one day—was it the first, was it the thousandth? I cannot tell—my thoughts were always in confusion and perpetually moving in a circle. It was toward evening in summer, the roar of the stream had grown deeper, when I heard the sound of a human step! To me, to me. Straighten yourself, bridge, make ready, railless beams, to hold up the passenger entrusted to you. If his steps are uncertain, steady them unobtrusively, but if he stumbles show what you are made of and like a mountain god hurl him across to land.**

\*

**It was toward evening one day—was it the first, was it the thousandth? I cannot tell—my thoughts were always in confusion and perpetually moving in a circle.**

The bridge feels lost, confused, stuck in the middle. He lost the track of time because it is stuck.

\*

**It was toward evening in summer, the roar of the stream had grown deeper, when I heard the sound of a human step! To me, to me. Straighten yourself, bridge, make ready, railless beams, to hold up the passenger**

entrusted to you.

How does the bridge feel?

He is excited and happy. Now, it will be recognized for what it is. That is the moment it was waiting for.

**If his steps are uncertain, steady them unobtrusively, but if he stumbles show what you are made of and like a mountain god hurl him across to land.**

What extra details or qualities does Kafka give to the bridge in this paragraph?

Kafka in this passage has given the bridge the ability to think, the ability to contemplate, the ability to support another human being, the ability to connect with another human being, the ability to protect passengers like a god (bravery, courage) even though the bridge does not feel well. The bridge feels uncertain and confused, but when a human's steps approached the bridge, everything changed from the perspective of the bridge.

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Let us read the third paragraph and analyze it:

**He came, he tapped me with the iron point of his stick, then he lifted my coattails with it and put them in order upon me. He plunged the point of his stick into my bushy hair and let it lie there for a long time, forgetting me no doubt while he wildly gazed around him. But then—I was just following him in thought over mountain and valley—he jumped with both feet on the middle of my body. I shuddered with wild pain, not knowing what was happening. Who was it? A child? A dream? A wayfarer? A suicide? A tempter? A destroyer? And I turned so as to see him. A bridge to turn around! I had not yet turned quite around when I already began to fall, I fell and in a moment I was torn and transpierced by the sharp rocks which had always gazed up at me so peacefully from the rushing water.**

\*

Let us analyze:

**He came, he tapped me with the iron point of his stick, then he lifted my coattails with it and put them in order upon me. He plunged the point of his stick into my bushy hair and let it lie there for a long time, forgetting me no doubt while he wildly gazed around him. But then—I was just following him in thought over mountain and valley—he jumped with both feet on the middle of my body. I shuddered with wild pain, not knowing what was happening.**

Think about the adjectives or words that Kafka is using in these sentences

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and tell me how does the bridge feel?

**Student:** sad and disappointed

**Professor:** why do you think it is sad and disappointed? What makes you think so? Give me words or adjectives refer to this. How does it feel to have a human being walks on the bridge from the perspective of a bridge?

**Student:** it hurts.

**Professor:** it hurts. How do you know? Give me specific words.

**Student:** shuddered with wild pain.

**Professor:** ok.

(Shuddered with wild pain, forgetting me with no doubt, he jumped with both feet on the middle of my body, he lifted my coattails with it and put them in order upon me etc.) are all examples of it hurts when a human being walks on the bridge.

**What does the meaning of (he lifted my coattails with it and put them in order upon me)?**

The coattails were hanging in the air and the passengers took the iron stick he was holding and lifted up the coattails to cover up the bridge, so how does it feel to have human beings walk on the top of your body?

Some of you said **painful**, others said **sad**, others said **disappointing** etc.

**A minute earlier, he was feeling like excited, protective, supportive, empowering. He wanted to empower and support human passengers, but now it's like the experience has a kind of reversed for him. Having a human physically visiting the bridge and touching the bridge is very painful and traumatic because the passenger is holding an iron stick. Basically, the experience from the perspective of the bridge has shifted completely from empowering, supportive, and protective to disempowering, painful, and disappointing.**

\*

**Who was it? A child? A dream? A wayfarer? A suicide? A tempter? A destroyer?**

Who are these people? Why is the bridge counting them? Who are they?

They are the people who travel. They are the travellers.

- Wayfarer: a traveller who travels on foot

What about (suicide)?

As a bridge handing in the air, you could witness all kinds of stories and actions, for example, two lovers making a love promise on top of the bridge, somebody committing suicide, or somebody enjoying the view, so there are too many options.

The bridge is speculating the roles the passengers play in its life.

What is the meaning of the **jump** from the perspective of the bridge when

it said (he jumped with both feet on the middle of my body)?  
It could have multiple meanings. It could be the jump of a child, it could be a jump of a triumph, it could be a jump of a suicide, or it could be a jump of happiness and excitement.

\*

**And I turned so as to see him.**

What happened to the passenger? They left. They moved on. They looked at the view and ignored the bridge. Of course, the bridge was contemplating and focusing on the sound of steps of the passenger as he was walking away.

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**A bridge to turn around! I had not yet turned quite around when I already began to fall, I fell and in a moment I was torn and transpierced by the sharp rocks which had always gazed up at me so peacefully from the rushing water.**

The passenger was a destroyer. The last two roles the bridge mentioned are (a tempter and a destroyer). Do you think the passenger tempted the bridge to commit suicide? What happened to the bridge at the end? It fell. Did you expect this ending?

**Student:** yes.

**Student:** no.

**Professor:** ok. What do you think of the ending of the short story?

**Student:** the harm of humanity.

**Professor:** the harmful effects of humanity on the bridge. It is a new title of our short story.

**Student:** life is not just.

**Professor:** life is not just from the perspective of the bridge. Why do you think that?

**Student:** because life doesn't recognize its existence and it doesn't appreciate its existence.

**Professor:** ok. Life doesn't recognize its existence and it doesn't appreciate its existence hanging in the air between two spots for many years. What is the meaning of my existence? This is one of the essential questions at the heart of this short story. What is the meaning of my existence as a bridge or as a bridge human being?

Life is not as you expected to be, so expectations are not like reality. Sometimes we think that we are significant in the life of someone, and then we collapse and realize that we are insignificant.

**There are signs and elements of alienation and isolation in this short story. There are traces of anxiety or maybe overthinking and depression.**

**Student:** the thoughts of the bridge are wrong from the very beginning because you don't need anyone to recognize you. **You don't need anyone.**

**Student:** who are we without other people?

**Professor:** you may kill yourself with your thoughts about lack of recognition; thoughts about lack of self-confidence; thoughts about anxiety, overthinking, isolation, alienation, the meaning of existence (why am I here? What's my function? What's the purpose of my life? Why am I not on any map?) etc.

(Am I enough?) this is what he says and at the end it's clear that he does not feel enough as a bridge; that's why it collapses.

The ending could have multiple meanings. You feel like somebody is waking from a dream. You feel like you are falling off the bed, but when you wake up, you see that you are not falling. It says so much about Franz Kafka and the life he lived.

Next time, we have a ten-minute presentation about Franz Kafka.

## Thank You

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Languages & Training

دورات متابعة ومكتبات

بإشراف نخبة من أفضل الأساتذة الجامعيين

في معهد الكندي

لطلاب الترجمة (التعليم المفتوح) ولجميع المواد



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