

Jewish Clues Around a City

Topic:

World Travel, History

Grade Level(s):

5th – 8th

Big Ideas:

- Traveling with an eye for open for symbols of Jewish life can help travelers discover Jewish stories through places, people, and historical memories.
- Because Jews have lived around the world for 2,000 years, traveling with curiosity can reveal Jewish history and culture in many locations.

Learning Targets

Students will:

1. Describe at least three types of “clues” that show Jewish presence in a community (buildings, names, stories, symbols, memorials, people, historical markers).
2. Through a scavenger hunt, students will practice using observation skills to identify Jewish clues—skills they can later apply when traveling to recognize signs of Jewish history and culture.
3. Write or orally recount a short travel story that incorporates what they learned on their scavenger hunt journey and explains why their travels were meaningful

Materials / Technology Needed

- [“Wherever You Go \(There’s Always Someone Jewish” song](#)
- [Google Earth](#). (If you don’t have a computer, use the map of the Czech Republic on page 6)
- Photos of Jewish Prague (pages 7 – 15)
- Jewish Prague Scavenger Hunt Worksheet (one for each group)
- Jewish Prague Scavenger Hunt Response Sheet For Teachers in separate document pages (included after the Jewish Prague Scavenger Hunt Worksheet)
- Pencils or pens

Prepare in Advance

Set up stations around the classroom with clues relating to Jewish Prague. Place one photo of Jewish Prague at each station.

Set up [Google Earth](#) on a computer attached to a large screen or on a Smartboard to visit the city of Prague.

Jewish Clues Around a City

Background for Teachers

When walking through a city, visitors can discover clues to Jewish life all around them. Synagogues, neighborhood names, cemeteries, memorials, and symbols all help tell the story of a Jewish community over time and show the richness and diversity of Jewish life in a place. Noticing these clues helps us connect past Jewish lives to the present and see how history continues to shape Jewish communities today. In modern life, when Jews can easily travel to many places around the world, finding clues of Jewish life can become an engaging adventure—like peeling back layers of a story. Each clue reveals something new: a synagogue hinges of community life, a food tradition points to daily practices, a name or symbol connects to language and memory. All of these indicators are found in Prague, a city where Jews have been found since at least the 10th century CE.

The Jewish Quarter (Josefov) was the place where Jews lived in Prague since the 13th century, enduring many trials and tribulations such as expulsion, pogroms, libels, plagues and fires. Jews settled in this fortified area of Prague, not to be segregated, but for protection. Living close together provided safety, community support, and access to places of study, worship, and communal rituals. When a wall was built in 1523, it enclosed the Jewish quarter mainly for defense; so Jews could close the gates of the wall during times of danger. Hence, the ghetto did not represent forced segregation since Jews were still legally free to move throughout the city. In 1782, the Emperor Joseph II granted rights to the Jews; so from then on Jews could purchase land outside the Jewish Quarter, serve in the army, and learn in institutions of higher learning. The Jewish Quarter, called Josefov in honor of Emperor Joseph II, today houses remnants of the old Jewish ghetto, including many synagogues and the Old Jewish cemetery. In the 20th century, the city of Prague destroyed the wall that surrounded the Jewish ghetto to give way to new buildings and shops.

Tomb of the *Maharal miPrague*

Among the close to 12,000 tombs in the Old Jewish Cemetery one can find the tomb of Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel, known by his acronym as the *Maharal miPrague*. The *Maharal* was a rabbinic authority, chief Rabbi, Talmudic scholar, mystic, and philosopher who died in 1609. His tomb features a lion. The name Loew/Löw comes from the German word Löwe, meaning lion, and the Yiddish name *Leib* has the same meaning. In Jewish tradition, the name Judah (Yehuda) is also associated with a lion (see [Beresheet 49:9](#)). Because Rabbi Judah Loew's name connects to both the word "lion" and the name Judah, the lion appears on his tomb as a symbol of his name and identity. The *Maharal miPrague* is closely associated with the mythical legend of the Golem, a figure made out of clay to protect the Jewish community from danger and whose remains are said to be stored in the *Altneu shul* attic.

Jewish Clues Around a City

The *Altneu* (Old-New) Synagogue is the oldest active synagogue in Europe. *Altneu* was built in the Gothic style in 1270 and was called at first the New synagogue (*Neu Shul*) to differentiate it from the old synagogue that was later burned down. In the 16th century more synagogues were built in the Jewish Quarter and therefore this synagogue was renamed the *Altneu Shul*, meaning Old-New Synagogue. The red trapezoid shaped flag in the synagogue has a Magen David to indicate this is a Jewish place. Rabbi Judah Loew, the *Maharal* miPrague, served as a rabbi and teacher at the *Altneu shul* in the 16th century. The name *Altneuschul* inspired Theodor Herzl, the visionary of Zionism, who later titled his book *Altneuland* (“Old–New Land”) as a way to connect the past with the present. The first *Altneu shul* picture on the left on page 9 is from 1845.

Kosher Prague Restaurant

Prague, being one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, attracts 6 to 8 million tourists annually. Many visitors to Prague are Jewish, drawn by the city’s rich and fascinating Jewish history. As a result, Prague has a vibrant selection of kosher restaurants throughout the city. Kosher cuisine does more than provide food that follows Jewish law—it connects people to generations of Jewish history and serves as a meaningful expression of Jewish identity, linking past traditions with present-day Jewish life.

Stumbling Stones

The *Stolpersteine*—the German word for stumbling stones—is a commemorative project created by Gunter Demnig and introduced in Germany in 1996. The project features 10×10 cm small brass plaques set into the ground in front of the person’s last address to mark where people were deported during the Holocaust. The plaques usually contain the name of the person, their date of birth, date of deportation, and date of death. The *Stolpersteine* project reached the Czech Republic in 1998, with the first stones installed in Prague in 2008.

Museum Franz Kafka

The life of Franz Kafka (1883-1924) and Prague are closely intertwined. Kafka was born, raised and died in Prague. Born to a Jewish family, he spoke and wrote in German. He was a lawyer by training and worked in an insurance company. He spent most of his leisure time writing stories of alienation, guilt, absurdity, and hopelessness. Prague is filled with memories, memorials, sculptures, and even a museum dedicated to his life’s work. Kafka is regarded as one of the most important writers of the 20th century.

Description of Activities

Play the song “Wherever You Go (There’s Always Someone Jewish)” as learners enter the room.

Jewish Clues Around a City

Tell learners that they will be going on a Jewish City Scavenger Hunt focused on Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic. Open Google Earth and zoom in the map of Jewish Quarter of Prague. Leave the map open throughout the entire activity. Some of the things they will see are from the time before the Czech Republic existed, when Prague was part of Bohemia. Around the room, there are several stations. Each station includes clues—such as a map, cartoon, image, or short text—that reveals something about Jewish life in Prague, past and present.

Learners will work in groups of three or four, moving from station to station. At each stop, they will carefully observe the clues and discuss with their group what they notice and how it connects to Jewish life. Each group will fill out one Scavenger Hunt worksheet. The answers to the Scavenger Hunt do not need to be fully accurate or complete - its purpose is to reflect learners' observations and thinking. After they have completed the worksheet, each group will use the clues they gathered to piece together a short story of Jewish life in Prague. The story should be about one paragraph (5 to 7 sentences) and can take place in any time period, the past, the present, or across more than one historical period. Groups may choose to write about:

- a) Real people they encountered in the scavenger hunt clues such as Rabbi Judah Loew or Franz Kafka
- b) Fictional characters who had visited or lived in Prague at any point in time (including themselves)
- c) A fictional story from the point of view of an object, a synagogue, a tombstone, a *mezuzah*, a Jewish restaurant, a *Stolpersteine*
- d) A fictional story of a teen who traveled to Prague with his family and discovered Jewish clues
- e) A day in the life of a teen or Jewish family living in Prague currently or in the past
- f) A story centered on food, tracing a Jewish recipe from the 12th century onwards
- g) A story centered on one single clue, a text, a picture, a map and what it reveals
- h) A teen explaining a story about Jewish Prague to a younger sibling
- i) A short newspaper article about Jewish Prague, present or past
- j) A story (real or fictional) about someone who find a tombstone or a *Stolpersteine* plaque of a member of his/her own family

Jewish Clues Around a City

When the class regroups, the teacher will go over the scavenger hunt responses, guiding a discussion to clarify ideas, correct misconceptions, and fill in missing historical details. Afterward, each group will read its story about Jewish Prague.

Differentiation Options

Knowing that students learn in a variety of ways and modalities, the following options are provided to adjust the above lesson to meet the unique needs of your learners.

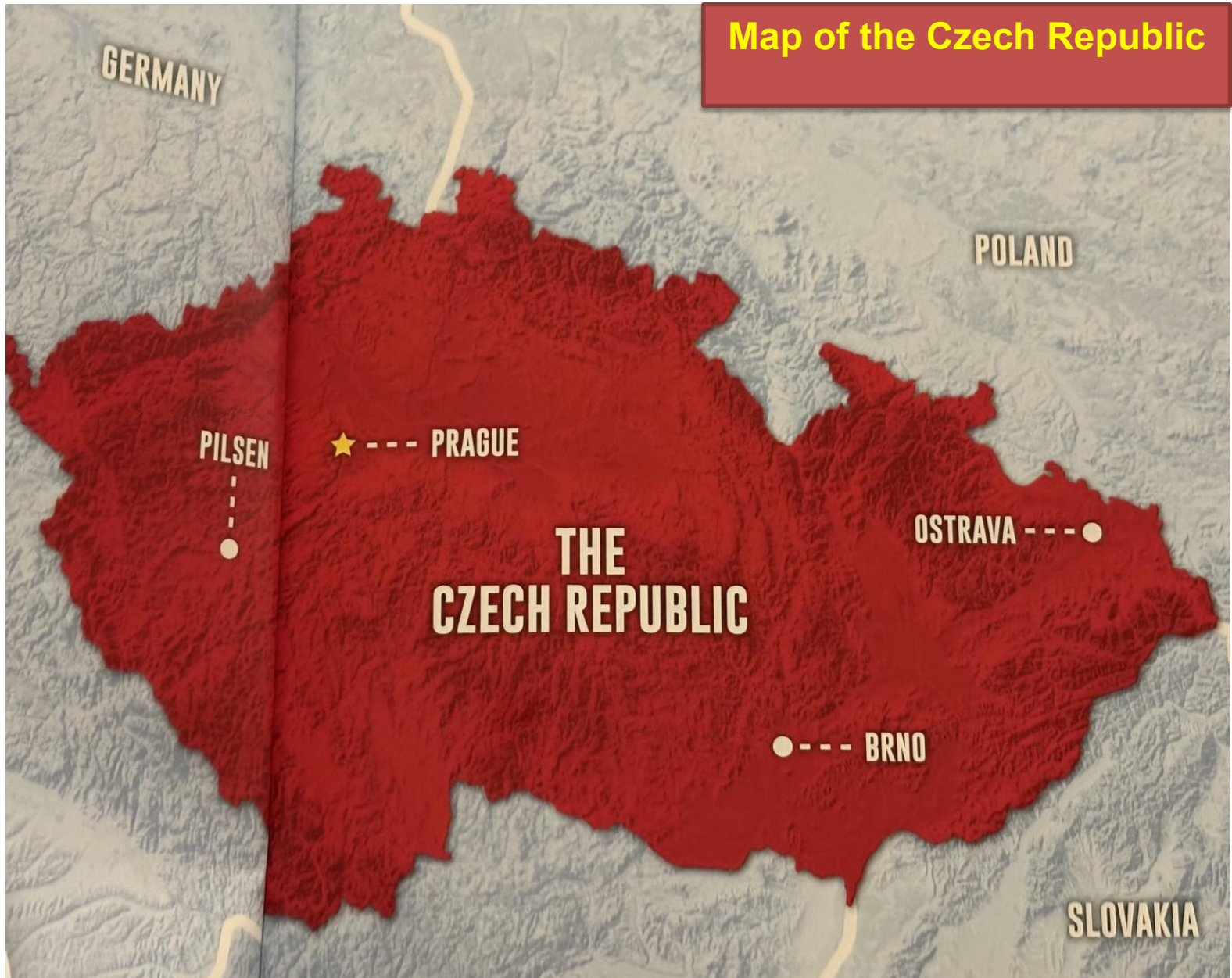
For learners who need more assistance

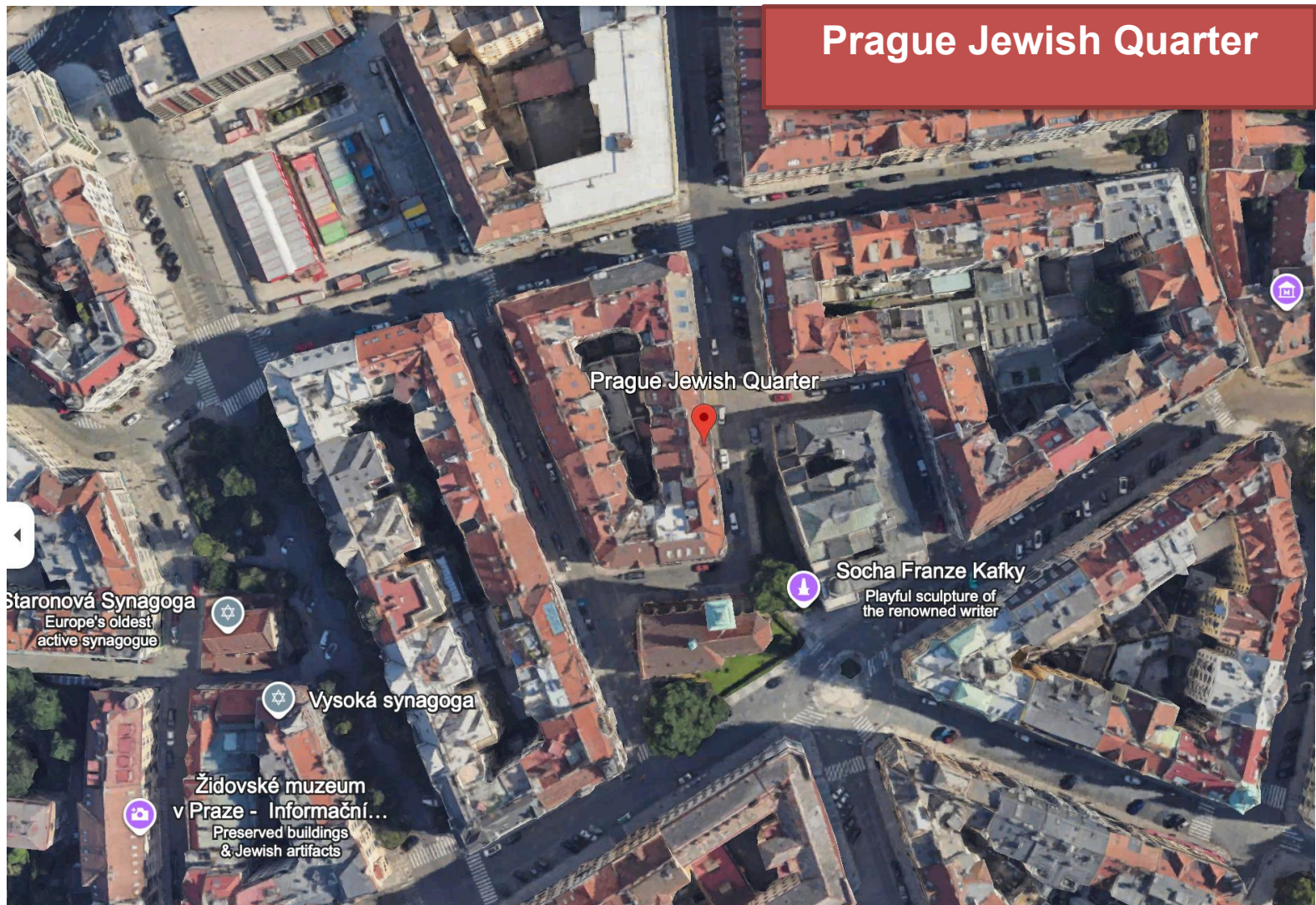
- Learners draw one clear visual for each type of Jewish clue that visitors can look for in any city. Examples include synagogues, cemeteries, Jewish neighborhoods, museums, Hebrew letters, Stars of David, *mezuzot*, famous Jewish individuals, Jewish restaurants, plaques, and memorials.
- Learners prepare a three-day itinerary to visit Jewish Prague based on the 6 locales of the scavenger hunt.

For learners who need extension opportunities

- Choose another city, research its Jewish history, and create a scavenger hunt that highlights key Jewish places and stories.
- Learners research Jewish life in a chosen city and create a postcard highlighting one important Jewish place, person, or story.

Map of the Czech Republic

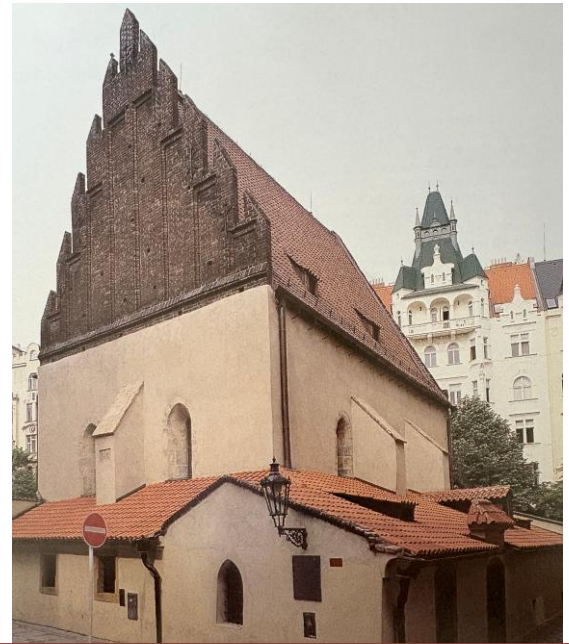
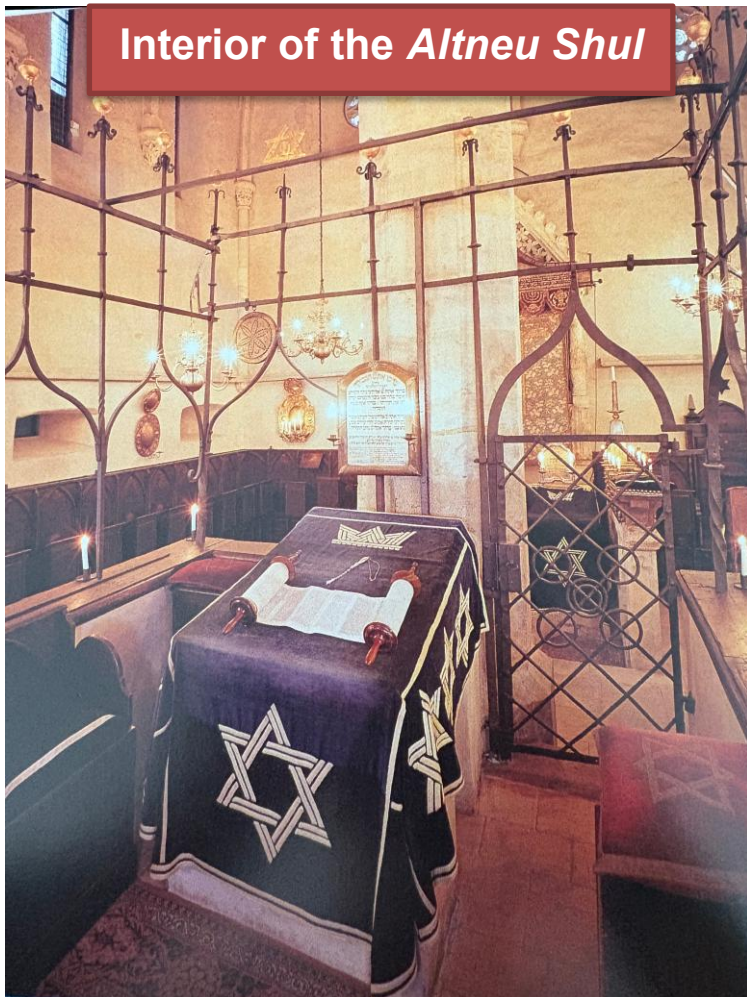








In the Old Jewish Cemetery



Stumbling Stone - Stolpersteine



Kosher Prague Restaurant



U-Milo Kosher Prague Restaurant offers a delightful culinary experience, showcasing a rich array of kosher dishes that reflect both tradition and creativity. Set in an inviting atmosphere near the River Vltava, this restaurant is perfect for those seeking quality meals any time of day. Guests rave about the freshly made pasta and pizzas, noting their perfectly cooked textures and vibrant flavors.

Must-Try Dishes:

- Pasta
- Pizza
- Baked Salmon with spinach, cheese, rice.
- Vegetable Soup
- Bohemian Trudenk: sweet treat for after a meal.

The Franz Kafka Museum

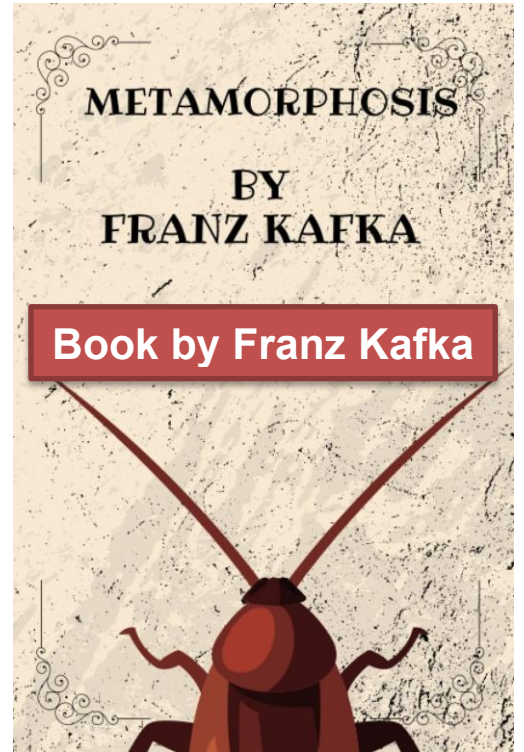


Photo of Franz Kafka



METAMORPHOSIS
BY
FRANZ KAFKA

Book by Franz Kafka



Excerpt from “The Trial” by Franz Kafka

"You can't go out, you are arrested." "So it seems," said K. "But what for?" he added. "We are not authorized to tell you that. Go to your room and wait there. Proceedings have been instituted against you, and you will be informed of everything in due course. I am exceeding my instructions in speaking freely to you like this. But I hope nobody hears me except Franz, and he himself has been too free with you, against his express instructions. If you continue to have as good luck as you have had in the choice of your warders, then you can be confident of the final result." K. felt he must sit down, but now he saw that there was no seat in the whole room except the chair beside the window. "You'll soon discover that we're telling you the truth," said Franz, advancing toward him simultaneously with the other man. The latter overtopped K. enormously and kept clapping him on the shoulder. They both examined his nightshirt and said that he would have to wear a less fancy shirt now, but that they would take charge of this one and the rest of his underwear and, if his case turned out well, restore them to him later. "Much better give these things to us than hand them over to the depot," they said, "for in the depot there's lots of thieving, and besides they sell everything there after a certain length of time, no matter whether your case is settled or not. And you never know how long these cases will last, especially these days. Of course you would get the money out of the depot in the long run, but in the first place the prices they pay you are always wretched, for they sell your things to the best briber, not the best bidder, and anyhow it's well known that money dwindles a lot if it passes from hand to hand from one year to another."