Samantha Hollister

A.P. Literature and Composition

Mrs. Rutan

26 January 2014

**A Caged Mind**

 In the short story, A Hunger Artist you are acquainted with, the Hunger Artist. The story blathers on and on about how much starvation is the key for this man, and the reason for his living; the Hunger Artist is caged, physically, and mentally.

A cage is the number one thing this literature is about—in my eyes—and is the exact reason it can stand for A Hunger Artist. The beginning of the short story says that he is put into a “small barred cage” (Kafka). This is literally the Hunger Artist’s home. He stay’s here at all costs and only leaves when he has too.

The Hunger Artist had limits, he couldn’t decide for himself. The impresario had set a “maximum length of time for the fasting at forty days” (Kafka). The Hunger Artsist was forced at this point to eat a meal set by the hospital but the Hunger Artist, “always fought back” (Kafka), at this point. Why? He was in-love with fasting. Fasting was his life. The Hunger Artist’s mind was set on the fact that without fasting he was nothing. He could do something that, “none of them could” (Kafka). The man in A Hunger Artist had a caged mind.

Throughout the story you are repeatedly brought back with the idea that the Hunger Artist wants more. He’s not satisfied. All the Hunger Artist seems to want is to “keep going for even longer” (Kafka), after the forty days and not have to be, “stopped after so long” (Kafka). He wants more. All that he craves is wanting to be able to prove to the people that he can go longer than they think—he is stronger than that. The impresario wouldn’t allow that however, and the “dissatisfaction kept gnawing at his insides” (Kafka), showing how he was cognitively caged around fasting.

Once the Hunger Artist signs into the circus he is quickly forgotten about. In his olden days he is anxious for peace; the Hunger Artist yearns for those moments and nights when he is left with few if any people and he can be alone; however, when he gets to the circus his excitement arrives when a large group of people come to see him. The Hunger Artist took for granted his fame, and was not willing to let go, and accept the change in society that had occurred. His mind was caged around the fact that fasting was a major deal and when it became apparent that it wasn’t anymore—especially when the circus workers had forgotten of him—he wanted to try harder; his mind would not accept that it was not as amusing to the people anymore, but only to his caged mind. When the circus people begin to clear the cage they had thought was empty, and stumbled across the Hunger Artist, the Hunger Artist admits that he, “always wanted (them) to admire my fasting” (Kafka). The man—the Hunger Artist—literally believed that he, “had to fast…(he) couldn’t do anything else” (Kafka). This time in the story before the Hunger Artist dies proves that his brain was enclosed into a cage like his body had been to show off the fasting that he could do.

Franz Kafka’s A Hunger Artist displays the lifestyle of a man who is ideally career centered. The Hunger Artist treats his fasting as his job to the people, and also himself. The want to prove to the public that he can actually go so long without eating and be okay with it—something they cannot do—has caged the Hunger Artist’s mind into only thinking about fasting for as long as he can. Although the Hunger Artist has already been put into the two cages for his displays, it is evident that the Hunger Artist is cognitively caged around fasting—he is literally a caged man inside and out.