Directions: *Read and annotate the text below to make meaning…*

Wash the white clothes on Monday and put them on the stone heap; wash the

color clothes on Tuesday and put them on the clothesline to dry; don’t walk barehead in the hot sun; cook pumpkin fritters1 in very hot sweet oil; soak your little cloths right after you take them off; when buying cotton to make yourself a nice blouse, be sure that it doesn’t have gum2 on it, because that way it won’t hold up well after a wash; soak salt fish overnight before you cook it; is it true that you sing benna3 in Sunday school?; always eat your food in such a way that it won’t turn someone else’s stomach; on Sundays try to walk like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming; don’t sing benna in Sunday school; you mustn’t speak to wharf-rat boys, not even to give directions; don’t eat fruits on the street – flies will follow you; but I don’t sing benna on Sundays at all and never in Sunday school; this is how to sew on a button; this is how to make a button-hole for the button you have just sewed on; this is how to hem a dress when you see the hem coming down and so to prevent yourself from looking like the slut I know you are so bent on becoming; this is how you iron your father’s khaki shirt so that it doesn’t have a crease; this is how you iron your father’s khaki pants so that they don’t have a crease; this is how you grow okra – far from the house, because okra4 tree harbors red ants; when you are growing dasheen5, make sure it gets plenty of water or else it makes your throat itch when you are eating it; this is how you sweep a corner; this is how you sweep a whole house; this is how you sweep a yard; this is how you smile to someone you don’t like too much; this is how you smile to someone you don’t like at all; this is how you smile to someone you like completely; this is how you set a table for tea; this is how you set a table for dinner; this is how you set a table for dinner with an important guest; this is how you set a table for lunch; this is how you set a table for breakfast; this is how to behave in the presence of men who don’t know you very well, and this way they won’t recognize immediately the slut I have warned you against becoming; be sure to wash every day, even if it is with your own spit; don’t squat down to play marbles –you are not a boy, you know; don’t pick people’s flowers – you might catch something; don’t throw stones at blackbirds, because it might not be a blackbird at all; this is how to make a bread pudding; this is how to make doukona6; this is how to make pepper pot7; this is how to make a good medicine for a cold; this is how to make a good medicine to throw away a child before it even becomes a child; this is how to catch a fish; this is how to throw back a fish you don’t like, and that way something bad won’t fall on you; this is how to bully a man; this is how a man bullies you; this is how to love a man; and if this doesn’t work there are other ways, and if they don’t work don’t feel too bad about giving up; this is how to spit up in the air if you feel like it, and this is how to move quick so that it doesn’t fall on you; this is how to make ends meet; always squeeze bread to make sure it’s fresh; but what if the baker won’t let me feel the bread?; you mean to say that after all you are really going to be the kind of woman who the baker won’t let near the bread?

1 *fritters:* small fried cakes of batter, often containing vegetables, fruit, or other fillings

2 *gum:* plant residue on cotton

3 *sing benna:* sing popular music (not appropriate for Sunday school)

4 *okra:* a shrub whose pods are used in soups, stews, and gumbo

5 *dasheen:* the taro plant, cultivated, like the potato, for its edible tuber

6 *doukona:* plantain pudding; the plantain fruit is similar to the banana

7 *pepper pot:* a spicy West Indian stew

Post Reading Questions:

1. What are some of your first observations and thoughts about this story?
2. What do we know about the character?
3. What do we notice about the diction and syntax? Why do you think the author writes the story this way?
4. How does this relate to Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*? Explain the parallels…