

## **Free Mrs X!**

By Marissa Pinkas

I developed this methodology to help students understand that an analytical essay is a highly structured answer to a question, in which the topics are evidence for their contention, answer or argument. I teach this in conjunction with teaching the TEEL (Topic, Explanation, Evidence, Linking word) method of planning an essay.

### **Writing a text essay - TEEL**

1. Most questions are introduced with a quote followed by "Discuss", or "Do you agree or disagree?"
2. Read the question a number of times. Underline the key words and think about what they mean.
3. Rephrase the question into your own words.
4. Brainstorm. Create a concept map and write down any quotes, points or thoughts that you can think of. Skip this step in an exam.
5. Plan. Your plan is the place where you organise all your thoughts and information into a coherent, logical essay. Use TEEL. Plan in point form.
  - T - Topic
  - E - Evidence
  - E - Examples
  - L - Linking sentence

Plan

Example topic for "Blueprints for a Barbed Wire Canoe" by Wayne Macauley "I wrote what else could I do?" What role/s did Bram play in the society of ur?

#### **Introduction**

- Answer the question, In *the novel Blueprints for a Barbed Wire Canoe by Wayne Macauley, the character of Bram played various vital roles which helped the residents of ur to become a community and to survive, from their first hopeful days and when the community was under siege and had no access to water or food.*
- Introduce your three topics in sentences.
  1. "his "position as writer, editor and publisher" which did afford him" a certain standing in the community".
  2. He was also the groups' strategist or "resident intellectual",
  3. Jodie's partner and son-in-law to Mad Michael, most important, hope of the future of ur and he still "sometimes lies in bed at night and dream{s} of a new estate rising from the ruins."

**Linking phrase-Initially,**

**Topic 1 – Writer, Editor and publisher, historian**

- **Explanation** –writer, editor and publisher of local paper, “The Voice”- mouthpiece to highlight residents’ concerns and problems
- authority and respect amongst the other residents.
- most residents, leave, die or even betray ur
- **Evidence** historian and archaeologist going back writing the history of ur. “a piece of glass, from a broken beer bottle a chipped house brick, a charred rabbit bone”.
- last person to leave
- writes posts letter to the government “threatening further action unless pressure was brought to bear on the shire to cease this unsanitary practice”
- **Linking sentence** – Bram’s roles as writer and publisher, create and record the community of ur

**2<sup>nd</sup> linking phrase - In addition,**

**Topic 2 –creates unity and sense of community amongst residents**

**Explanation** –prints a leaflet, residents pool resources by opening a joint bank account to survive. Unite and help each other.

- local economy Vito’s vegetable gardens, Craig selling scrap from houses.
- Dave and Slug’s bar build community spirit sense of togetherness, Slug leaves when he stops believing in ur’s future, Vito escapes over the wall before the invasion.
- **Examples** organises for Craig to use the community money to continue calling Marie Claire in France when public phone vandalised.
- negotiates with the government representatives, Layland and Loch
- **–Linking sentence 1** – Bram’s presence is unifying for residents, he is the de facto leader

**Topic 3 –represents hope for and believes in future of ur**

**Linking sentence 2 – Moreover**

**Explanation** –hopeful of having family suburban life with wife and child when he falls in love with Jodie lover of Jodie and son-in-law of Michael .

- **Examples** “Don’t I say to myself, Bram take heart, keep faith, this may merely be the prelude of greater things to come?”
- Bram waiting for Jodie
- “This is my wife, this is my home, my children are sleeping, and all is well in the world.”
- Only Craig and Marie Claire survive as a couple and raise a family because they left they got as far away as possible.
- – Is Bram a deluded fool? possibly, he only leaves ur when nothing and no one else is left there for him. “that nonsense is over... tomorrow I leave for Haranhope ( ironic name) where a barrow of bricks lies waiting.
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**Linking sentence 1** – Bram continues to believe in ur long after most residents have left or given up hope, his relationship with Jodie perhaps makes him stay on longer than he should and her death causes him to return to complete writing the history of ur.

**Conclusion** - repeat your three main topic points using different wording.

Repeat your argument

Never introduce a new point in the conclusion.
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### Analogy

I have found providing students with a concrete structure on which to 'hang' their ideas, has enabled them to plan more easily and to write more effective essays. This structure also supports students' understanding that they need to answer a question.

Using the "Free Mrs X" analogy, I ask students to imagine that they are lawyers who are planning their closing argument in which Mrs X has been accused of murdering her husband Mr X. Most students are very familiar with this scenario because of exposure to television dramas such as *Law and Order*. The need to use supporting sentences and to prove their contention using evidence become obvious to students when their roles are to convince the jury that Mrs X is innocent of murder.

- The question is "Mrs X murdered Mr X?" Do you agree or disagree?

The question is deliberately phrased like an analytical essay question, for example,

"The physical and historical settings of *Hard Times* are inseparable from the novel's themes and plot" Discuss.

- The use of a table as a graphic visualiser also aids students particularly those who are visual thinkers

<b>Introduction</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Contention:</b> Mrs X is innocent of murdering Mr X</li><li>• Introduce your three <b>topics</b> in sentences.<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. "No motive, loved her husband dearly, devoted couple</li><li>2. No time, Mrs X was at work from 10 am till 4pm and Mr X was killed between 2 and 4 pm</li><li>3. Mr X was shot with a rifle and Mrs X has pathological fear of guns.</li></ol></li></ul>
<b>Linking word- Firstly,</b>
<b>Topic 1 – No motive</b>





1. "No motive, loved her husband dearly, devoted couple
2. No time, Mrs X was at work from 10 am till 4pm and Mr X was killed between 2 and 4 pm
3. Mr X was shot with a rifle and Mrs X has pathological fear of guns.

- **Explanation/supporting sentences** – Mrs X loving faithful supportive, happy couple
- Renewed marriage vows
- Mrs X devastated by death
- **Evidence**
- Statements from children, two friends and Mr X's brother, happiness
- Love letter from Mrs X to Mr X
- **Linking sentence** – Mrs X loved Mr X- innocent!

**Linking word- Moreover**

**Topic 2 – No time**

- **Explanation/supporting sentences** – Mrs X working from 10 am to 4pm, Mr X killed between 2 and 4 pm
- **Evidence**
- Security video footage of Mrs X arriving at work at 9:50 am and leaving at 4pm
- Statements boss, three colleagues and security guard where she works
- Autopsy report
- **Linking sentence** – Mrs X could not have murdered Mr X- Free Mrs X!.

**Linking word- Above all,**

**Topic 3 – Mr X shot with Sabre Defence rifle, Mrs X scared of guns**

- **Explanation/supporting sentences** – Mrs X has a panic attack when she sees a gun, went for therapy
- She did not know how to use any gun.
- This rifle is extremely heavy, not possible Mrs X to lift
- **Evidence** Statement for Mrs X's therapist
- Statement from gun expert about heaviness of rifle
- **Linking sentence** – Mrs X did not murder Mr X, she is wrongly accused

**Conclusion** - repeat your three main topic points using different wording.

Repeat your argument

Never introduce a new point in the conclusion.