

# The Magic of the Magic Box

‘The Marxist perspective has little to offer democratic societies.’ Explain and assess this view.

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|--|--|
| <p><i>Thesis: 1</i></p> <p><i>The Marxist perspective has little to offer democratic societies.</i></p> <p><i>Functionalist Theory</i></p> | <p><i>Proof</i></p> <p><i>Social mobility in democratic societies</i></p> <p><i>The existence of a middle class → social stability, Value Consensus</i></p> <p><i>Marx's emphasis on revolutionary change. Change to what?</i></p> |
| <p><i>Thesis 2</i></p> <p><i>The Marxist Perspective has great deal to offer democratic societies</i></p> <p><i>Marxist Theory</i></p>     | <p><i>Proof</i></p> <p><i>Social mobility is low</i></p> <p><i>High levels of inequality</i></p> <p><i>Alienation, low-income workers and unemployment</i></p>   |

What I call the Magic box is a great tool to use to organize your thoughts and to make sure you are incorporating theory into your essays. It only takes about two minutes, so it is well worth your time to use it **before** you start writing your paper. Above is the first option. At the top of the paper is an example of a sociology essay prompt. It's asking you to assess a theory, in this case, the Marxist Perspective. Draw your magic box. In the first box, offer a thesis that confirms your prompt. Include a theory that supports your thesis, in this case, functionalism. In the box to the right include all of the elements of that theory that proves this thesis. In the next left hand box, offer a second thesis. Include a theory that confirms your second thesis. In the right hand box include all of the proofs you can think of for that thesis. Viola, you have your outline.

This is a good variation of the magic box to use if you are not sure of the direction you want to go with the prompt. It shouldn't take you long to figure out which thesis has the most or the strongest proof to support it. Your strongest argument becomes the **THESIS** for your essay. The weaker argument becomes your **ANTITHESIS**.

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|   |  |
|---|--|
| <i>The Marxist perspective has little to offer democratic societies.</i>  |  |
| <i>Proof 1</i><br><br><i>Functionalism</i><br><br><i>Social Mobility in Democratic Societies</i><br><br><i>Middle Class</i>                         | <i>Proof 2</i><br><br><i>Weakness</i><br><br><i>Revolutionary Change...</i><br><i>what are we going to change into?</i>    |
| <i>Proof 3</i><br><br><i>Postmodernism</i><br><br><i>Transition from industrial to postindustrial society.</i><br><i>Marx did not count on this</i> | <i>Antithesis</i><br><br><i>Mobility is low</i><br><br><i>Inequality is increasing</i><br><br><i>Middle class is shaky</i> |

The next variation of the magic box is one you can use if you already have a good idea on the direction that you want to go. In this case, you've already decided that you have a strong argument for confirming the prompt. In this case you use the very top box to write your thesis (you don't need this element of the box). In your top boxes you can outline the strongest proofs for that support your thesis. In this case I use a theory that supports my thesis and the proofs that support this theory. In the second box I highlight a weakness in the prompted theory. That way I know I'm covering the theory that is mentioned in the prompt. You can also include another proof for your thesis. It depends on the prompt

The bottom boxes are a little different. In the left hand box you want your third proof, but this should include a second theory or perspective that supports your thesis. This makes your argument stronger. In this case I use post-modernism.

In the fourth box you want your **ANTITHESIS** and its corresponding supports.

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|  |                                 |   |  |
|--|---------------------------------|---|--|
| <i>The Marxist perspective has little to offer democratic societies.</i> |                                 |   |  |
| <i>Support 1</i>   | <i>Functionalism:</i>           | <i>Support 2</i>                            | <i>Functionalism</i>                       |
|  | <i>Social Mobility</i>          |   | <i>Value Consensus on</i>                  |
|  | <i>Middle Class</i>             |   | <i>Democratic values</i>                   |
| <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/>                              |                                 | <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> |  |
| <i>Counter 1</i>   | <i>Social Mobility is low</i>   | <i>Counter 2</i>                            | <i>Some people do not benefit from the</i> |
|  | <i>Middle class is shaky</i>    |   | <i>consensus. False Consciousness</i>      |
| <i>Support 3</i>   | <i>Weakness:</i>                | <i>Support 4</i>                            | <i>Postmodernism</i>                       |
|  | <i>Revolutionary</i>            |   | <i>Marx theorized</i>                      |
|  | <i>Change</i>                   |   | <i>about industrial societies</i>          |
| <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/>                              |                                 | <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> |  |
| <i>Counter 3</i>   | <i>Change may be necessary,</i> | <i>Counter 4</i>                            | <i>Postmodern exploitation looks a</i>     |
|  | <i>Reform movements</i>         |   | <i>lot like Industrial exploitation</i>    |

Above is a third variation. It's really versatile. You start with a thesis in the top box. Again, the top box is optional. In this case, however, each of your quarters are divided into two. In each quarter box you include a support for the thesis statement in the top half and a counter-point in the bottom half. Be sure to include a theory in each support at the very least. I also included a weakness in the prompted theory since that aligned with my prompt. I can also use a weakness in my proposed theory in the counter-points. Like I said, this is very versatile.

Now if you have strong supports for your thesis, then you can feel pretty good about your thesis. If you look and see that your counter-points may be a little stronger, you might just change your thesis according to the counter-points.

If it's easier to fill in the supports than the counter-points, your thesis is strong. If it is easier to fill in the counter-points than the supports, you might want to change your thesis. It's not too late, however. You have not started writing yet.