

The Magic of the Magic Box

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

<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**.

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

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

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

<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>
<hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/>		<hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/>	
<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.

Explain and assess the view that family life benefits males more than females

Does family life benefit males over females?

<p>Feminism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unequal division of labor • Second Shift, Third Shift • Inequality in the marketplace and inequality in the family self-perpetuating • Maternity Leave <p style="text-align: right;">Yes</p>	<p>Postmodernism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater choices for women • Confluent love • More diverse family arrangements • Women have greater power to negotiate status in the family <p style="text-align: right;">Yes, but getting there</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Yes</p> <p>Functionalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm bath = Male benefit • Parson's Gendered Division of Labor • Antiquated but remnants still remain 	<p style="text-align: right;">No</p> <p>Post-Feminism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Echoes postmodernism • Ability to divorce • Higher education and career options for women

Progress is being made, but family life still benefits men over women

This one is a variation of the Magic Box that I like very much. I use it especially when I don't have a clear idea of a thesis, or I can see where the argument can go multiple directions. I turn the prompt into a question and write it to the left of the box. I then use the boxes to highlight the arguments from multiple theories and/or perspectives. In the central corner of each box I simply write, "yes" "no" or a quick caveat, a "yes, but..." or "no, but..." Once I do that, my strongest argument is easy. The argument with the most support from multiple angles is probably the strongest argument.

In this sample above, it's clear that the answer to the question is "yes, family life does benefit males more than females." That answer becomes my thesis. I use the feminist perspective as my strongest argument, supported with the functionalist perspective. The postmodernist and post-feminist theories constitute my antithesis. Bam! My whole essay is outlined in just a couple of minutes.