

## Preparation sheet for Seminar

(to be handed out at least 1 week in advance)

# Essay Plans and the '13 Ways'

---

- AIMS**
- \* To practise the 'Black-Red-Green' Method.
  - \* Create a **Core Statement**.
  - \* Generate a 'visual' **Essay Plan** using the **13 Ways**.

**Materials**      Suitably coloured pens.  
All handouts for 'Answering the Question'.

---

### **PREPARATION**                      (to be completed **BEFORE** Seminar)

- Choose **either** QUESTION A **or** QUESTION B (see below).
- Use the **Black-Red-Green** Method [ + *Shadow-WordS* handout] to interpret your chosen question. Generate a 'side' or so of notes and ideas, making sure you cover all the question's various aspects.
- Using the notes you made, compose a thorough and convincing **Core Statement** for your answer (in one sentence; or *maybe* two).
- Next, generate an **Essay Plan** based on **one of the '13 Ways'**. Choose a 'Way' that seems to fit your approach. Your Plan should take the form of an annotated image on one side of A4. Avoid masses of detail or comment: the *structure* is all-important.
- Bring NOTES, CORE STATEMENT and PLAN **with you** to the Seminar.

[Remember: you're NOT writing the essay itself, just designing its structure.]

---

### **VERY IMPORTANT**

Please stay focused on how you interpret the question, organise your ideas and structure your response. The detailed points you use to support your argument are of course relevant; but this Seminar isn't really about the essay's content.

In annotating your image, don't go beyond key facts and encapsulating phrases. Rather, spend as much time as you can exploring how best to build a strong and relevant logical structure into your essay.

---

#### **QUESTION A**

[or substitute your own Question A]

"Imagine you were editing *New Writing 12* for a second edition. Identify one prose piece you would definitely keep in, and another you would possibly exclude. Establish your criteria. How consistently can they be applied to different texts?"

#### **QUESTION B**

[or substitute your own Question B]

"If you had to advise Byron to remove around a dozen stanzas from one of his Don Juan cantos – mainly for reasons of length – which stanzas would they be, and why? Justify your criteria and (from what you know of Byron and his poetry) suggest what some of his objections might be."

---

---

## **Seminar**    **'Essay Plans and the 13 Ways'**    (55 mins)

---

**AIMS**    Practise the **Black-Red-Green Method**; create a **Core Statement** and (using the **13 Ways**) a 'visual' **Essay Plan**. Discuss the process; reassess your approach.

**NEEDS**    Pens (Black, Red, Green). *Done in advance:* Core Statements + Visual Essay Plans.

**QUESTION A**    "Imagine you were editing *New Writing 12* for a 2nd edition. Identify one prose piece you would definitely keep in, and another you would possibly exclude. Establish your criteria. How consistently can they be applied to different texts?"

**QUESTION B**    "If you had to advise Byron to remove around a dozen stanzas from one of his *Don Juan* cantos – mainly for reasons of length – which stanzas would they be, and why? Justify your criteria and (from what you know of Byron and his poetry) suggest what some of his objections might be."

---

### **(a) Introduction**    *Tutor-led plenary*    [2 minutes]

To begin with, make sure everyone takes on board the following comments:

"Throughout this Seminar, try to stay focused on how you interpreted the question, organised your ideas and structured your response. The detailed points you used in support of your argument are of course relevant; but this seminar isn't really about the essay's content. Don't get distracted by the facts themselves. *You're **NOT** here to write an actual essay, but to design a suitable structure for one.* So, concentrate your energies on how best to use the '13 WAYS' to develop a convincing logical structure for your work."

---

### **(b) 'Black-Red-Green' Method**    *Tutor-led plenary*    [18 minutes]

- (i) Get volunteers to read the questions **aloud** and **slowly**, TWICE (to ensure everyone's really heard them, and to refresh your memory of them). [2 mins]
- (ii) Without referring to your Essay Plans, quickly recap the **Black-Red-Green Method** and **Shadow-WordS** [3 mins (max)]. Without going into detail, did you find them useful? Briefly share one or two insights or problems [3 mins (max)].
- (iii) Now run through one of the questions, one colour at a time. Which phrases would you underline **Black, Red, Green**? Do you all agree on this? If time allows, do the other question as well. (Don't 'switch off' during the question you *didn't* do: it's revealing to listen in!) [(at least) 10 mins]

---

### **(c) Core Statements**    *Small groups*    [10 minutes]

Split up into small groups (2 or 3 per group) making sure everyone in your group attempted the **same question** ['A' or 'B'].

Taking turns, read out your Core Statement **exactly as it's written down**. Don't introduce or embellish it, or refer to your Essay Plan. Simply read out the Statement slowly, twice, *as it stands*: that's the real test of its effectiveness.

The others in your group should say whether or not they can 'see' what you're up to. Is your Core Statement clear, well-structured, convincing? Has it left out anything crucial? Does it fall into the trap of describing *what* the essay will do, without explaining *how* or *why*? Is it vague? Offer constructive feedback.

---

### **(d) Essay Plans & the '13 Ways'**    *Small groups*    [15 minutes]

- (i) Quickly, run your eyes over the '13 Ways' chart. Don't discuss it; just refresh your memory. Now, without revealing Essay Plans, take turns to **explain** [1 min each (max)] which of the '13 Ways' you chose to structure your Plan, and **why**....

(P.T.O for some examples...)

---

**Essay Plans & the '13 Ways'** [Seminar Sheet, p.2]

---

For instance...

**"I was in two minds over '3a' and '3b'; but finally went for '3a' because I wanted an exciting, confrontational style; also, I noticed ... etc."**

**"It was always going to be 'Way 12' for me: after all, there's been so much dross written about ... etc."**

Time is very short, so please keep explanations brief and to the point. [3 mins]

- (ii) Once each explanation has been heard, **place all of your group's Essay Plans on the table** in front of you (this is the first time you've seen them properly). Look them over. Ask about anything that's unclear (in the structure). [5 mins]
- (iii) Focus on *one* Essay Plan in your group. Could any of the *other* 'Ways' do the job better? If you're stuck for ideas, simply take a different 'Way' (at random) and discuss whether it might work for that Essay. What would need to change? What might be the benefits (or dangers) of the new structure? Even where the existing structure is strong, could it be **altered** to improve it at all? [6 mins]
- (iv) Have you changed your mind about which structure to use – yes or no? [1 min]

---

(e) **Open Discussion**

*Tutor-led plenary* [10 minutes]

- (i) Without comment, take a vote on these ('yes or no') using a show of hands:
1. "Without the BLACK-RED-GREEN method, I'd have missed a key issue in that question."
  2. "*ShadoW-WordS* helped me to spot a vital clue in the way the question was worded."
  3. "Core Statements are more trouble - and anxiety - than they're worth."
  4. "You just can't beat an annotated image for producing a well-structured essay plan!"
  5. "Images store lots of information about the essay's structure, true; but I still think you need to produce all the chaotic pages of notes *first*."
  6. "Damn and blast the 13 Ways! You still don't *really* understand something until you've written it all out in sentences and paragraphs..."

At the end, discuss any points arising!

- (ii) Hands up, if you *did* change your mind about which of the '13 Ways' to use for your Essay Plan [in (d) (iv)]. Get a volunteer or two to explain why.

---

*We're out of time. If you have any minutes left, have a go at one of the questions below; or use them after the seminar as a 'follow-through' activity, to consolidate and extend your insights.*

- How might your Plan change for a different kind of audience or context (eg an oral presentation, or a lecture handout, rather than an essay)?
- Find examples where the wording or structure of the **question** strongly influences the probable structure of its answer (eg questions beginning 'Compare and Contrast...').
- Most essays have a word limit. Are some structures more likely than others to over-run?
- Which do you prefer to write **first**: the Core Statement or the Essay Plan? Why?
- What dangers might there be in the '13 Ways' as a universal approach to Essay Planning? When should they be left behind, or taken with a large pinch of salt?

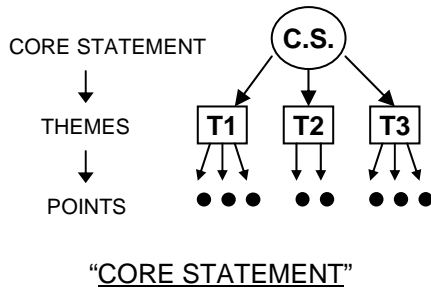
---

[ NOTE. To do this seminar you need the '13 Ways' Chart, p. S3. You may also use your own Questions A & B. ]

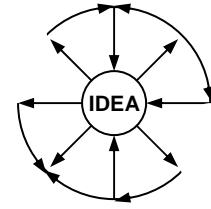
# BUILDING AN ARGUMENT / LOGICAL STRUCTURE:

## The '13 WAYS'

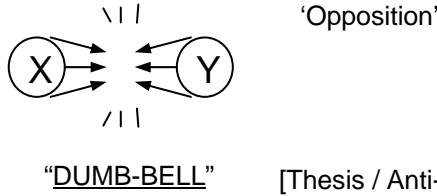
1.



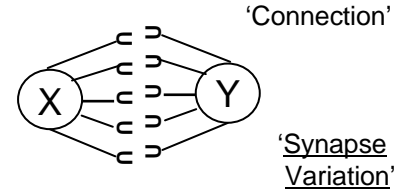
2.



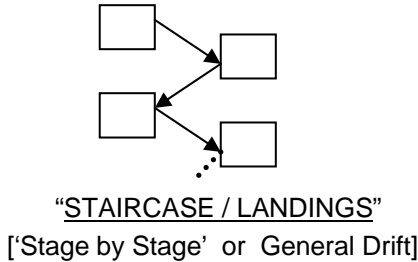
3a.



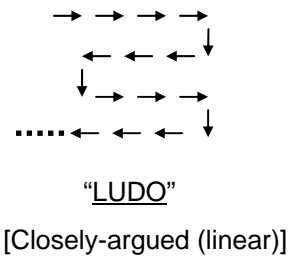
3b.



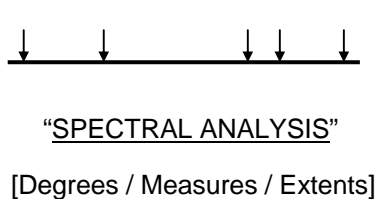
4.



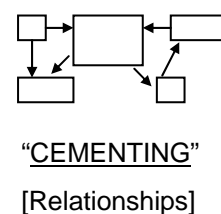
5.



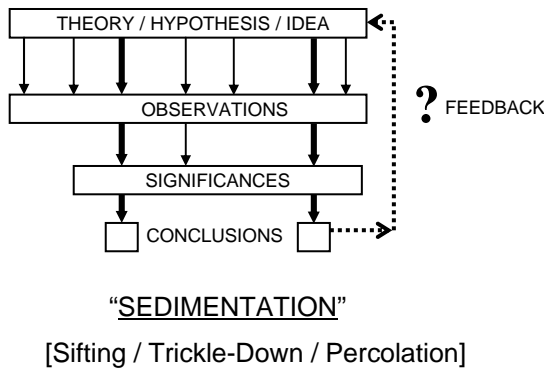
6.



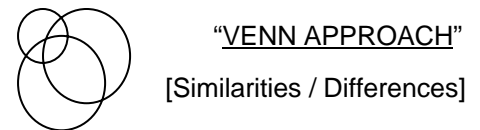
7.



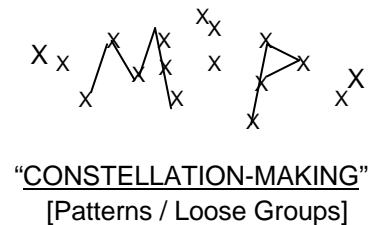
8.



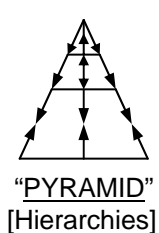
9.



10.



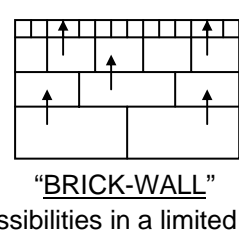
11.



12.



13.



... etc. + **ADAPTATIONS & HYBRIDS** of these.

**BUT** a CORE STATEMENT is always useful !

© Mario Petrucci, 2002

**'STUDY SKILLS'**

# 'The 13 Ways'

## Alternative Seminar (with more varied / general tasks)

When tackling a task, don't skimp on the planning. Your response will be far more impressive if it shows purpose, and a clear and consistent structure. The 13 WAYS can help with this.

---

**INTRODUCTION** (1) Look through *The 13 Ways* [see chart] (*what do they represent?*)  
[Tutor-led] (2) Find 1 Strength/ 1 Weakness in each (*what might these be?*)

---

**MAIN EXERCISE** *Split up into small groups. Each group will be allocated one of the writing tasks 'A' → 'F' (below).*

(3) In your groups, discuss which of the **13 Ways** might be suited to your writing task.  
*Note: if several Ways seem suitable, choose just one.*

(4) As a group, sketch an outline of how you would structure your written piece.

**Important:** *Keep this to about half a side of A4. Remember, you're thinking about how to STRUCTURE your ideas, rather than detailed CONTENT. Your outline should simply summarise what the piece will say, according to the Way you chose. You could do this in the form of a diagram (annotated with key-words & phrases) or as a simple map or list of ideas.*

(5) Report back! *Which of the 13 Ways did you choose? Why? Did it work?*

---

**TASK A** **University Essay.** "Consider the pros and cons of a 'modular' approach to university teaching, giving particular emphasis to the potential problems of course assessment." *Note: your lecturer/tutor favours flair, but not at the expense of thoroughness. She hates major omissions.*

**TASK B** **Article.** "Shakespeare – in twenty minutes?! The Qwik-Fit Shakespeare Company." *Your editor is trying to get a new popular weekly magazine off the ground, aimed at twenty-somethings. Needs to be punchy.*

**TASK C** **Film review, the Independent on Sunday.** "Slash and Burn – have horror movies had their day?" *Your editor is a 'junket-junkie' who thinks he's Oscar Wilde. An absolute Psycho for precise word-counts – will cut ruthlessly. So, plan in some flexibility for that...*

**TASK D** **Article, college newsletter.** "My first week at Brookes University ... some near-misses!" *Editor probably won't read it, but wants something any hurried student can get through: personal, funny maybe, but of real use too.*

**TASK E** **Exam Question.** "Jane Eyre – typical Brontë, or best of the bunch? Discuss." *Tutor is willing to consider all views – however outrageous – but insists on the question being interpreted in depth.*

**TASK F** **Job Application/ Presentation to Interview Panel.** Notes to take with you on the train, for a ten-minute oral presentation of 'who you are'. *The panel wants to know the truth, warts and all, but also seeks reassurance that you can be proactive and efficient. Expect the unexpected question!*

---

**Further Discussion.** Perhaps the most common essay 'structure' is the **symphonic form** :

INTRO → DEVELOPMENT → CONCLUSION (i.e. Beginning → Middle → End)

- Is this present, at all, in the 13 Ways (e.g. a special case of 'Way 1', with a Conclusion added)?
- The 13 Ways show how your ideas relate to one another in the *body* of the text. So, is 'Beginning - Middle - End' a logical structure in itself, or just a way of framing one? In other words, could ALL of the 13 Ways be arranged (or adapted) to have an Introduction—Development—Conclusion?

---

### **Final Points/ Follow-up work.**

- \* Find cases where the structure (or wording) of the task strongly influences the likely structure of response.
- \* When are *The 13 Ways* most useful? When should they be taken with a big pinch of salt? Why?

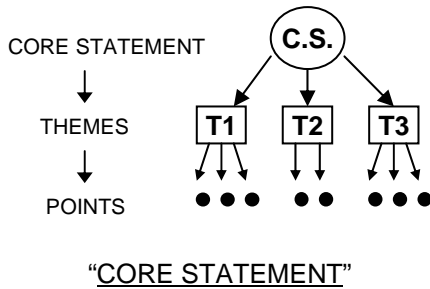
---

[NOTE: to do this seminar you need the '13 Ways' Chart.]

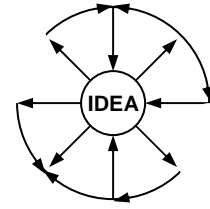
# BUILDING AN ARGUMENT / LOGICAL STRUCTURE:

## The '13 WAYS'

1.

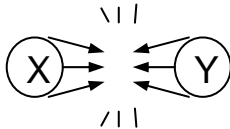


2.



"CARTWHEEL"  
[ = themeless Core Statement? ]

3a.

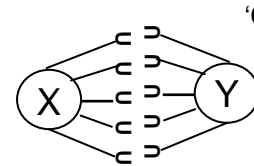


"DUMB-BELL"

'Opposition'

[Thesis / Anti-thesis → 'Synthesis']

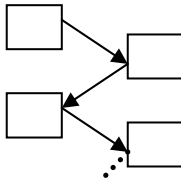
3b.



'Connection'

'Synapse  
Variation'

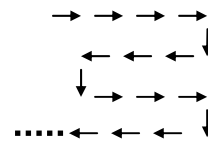
4.



"STAIRCASE / LANDINGS"

[ 'Stage by Stage' or General Drift ]

5.



"LUDO"

[ Closely-argued (linear) ]

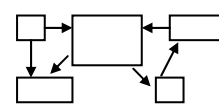
6.



"SPECTRAL ANALYSIS"

[ Degrees / Measures / Extents ]

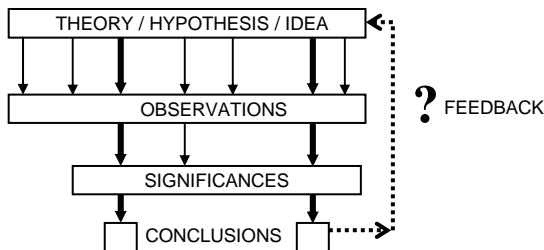
7.



"CEMENTING"

[ Relationships ]

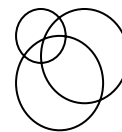
8.



"SEDIMENTATION"

[ Sifting / Trickle-Down / Percolation ]

9.



"VENN APPROACH"

[ Similarities / Differences ]

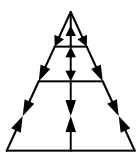
10.



"CONSTELLATION-MAKING"

[ Patterns / Loose Groups ]

11.



"PYRAMID"

[ Hierarchies ]

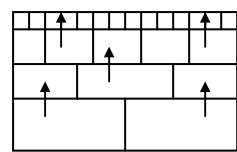
12.



"SWEEPING"

[ Make clear by elimination ]

13.



"BRICK-WALL"

[ All possibilities in a limited range ]

... etc. + **ADAPTATIONS & HYBRIDS** of these.

**BUT** a CORE STATEMENT is always useful !

© Mario Petrucci, 2002

**'STUDY SKILLS'**

---

Some possible conclusions from the Seminar ...

... 'Essay Plans and the 13 Ways'

---

## Essay Plans & other Tasks : 4 Steps

---

- When constructing (say) an Essay Plan, **PAUSE** at several points in the process ...

... check you're actually *Answering the Question*.

Use every technique you can (Black-Red-Green, etc).

---

- At some stage, start *Questioning your Answer* ...

Have you considered the logical structure of your response ?  
Is there any obvious structure *at all* ?

If so, what *kind* of structure is dominant ?

Which of the '13 Ways' best describes it ?

Are you using that structure in a consistent way ?

---

- Going deeper... what are the likely **strengths** and **weaknesses** of your chosen structure ?

Does it 'fit' the task, or suit the given audience/ context ?

---

- Finally, have the courage to **change your mind**.

If needed, find a structure better suited to the task at hand.

Does your 'Core Statement' have to change with it ?

Allow the Statement to evolve...

Experiment! Adapt, patch, improvise, shift...

---

Applies to tasks of many kinds, not just Essay Plans !

---

OPTIONAL (to raise the issue of Memory...) **MNEMONIC to remember the above:**

**Pause, Answer, STrengths/WEAKNESSES, CHANGE Your mind**