

Creating a high quality essay topic

If you were in class today then this is a reminder of what I mean by a well unpacked prompt.

As we discussed, this is when your prompt truly becomes a statement of what your essay will be exploring/proving.

Starting out with the prompt:

When you are given a prompt the first job you have is to identify the key terms, as we all know.

'*Maestro* shows us the lasting power of regrets.'

So with this prompt we are looking at the following key terms

- *Maestro* - being the novel we are studying
- Lasting power - A long lasting or far-reaching effect
- Regrets -

regrets 3rd person singular present, plural of re-gret

Verb
Feel sad, repentant, or disappointed over (something that has happened or been done, esp. a loss or missed opportunity).

Noun
A feeling of sadness, repentance, or disappointment over something that has happened or been done.

Synonyms for regret

Common

Informal



anguish	heartache	affliction	ruefulness
annoyance	heartbreak	apologies	scruple
apology	misgiving	care	self-accusation
bitterness	nostalgia	compunction	self-condemnation
concern	qualm	conscience	
contrition	remorse	demur	self-disgust
disappointment	repentance	dole	self-reproach
discomfort	sorrow	lamentation	woe
dissatisfaction	uneasiness	pang	regretfulness
grief	worry	penitence	

Antonyms for regret

calmness

comfort

contentment

delight

happiness

joy

pleasure

relief

satisfaction

ignorance

negligence

contentedness

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Now that you have a wider understanding of the key terms it helps to think about what this prompt is really saying in your own terms.

To me it's saying 'The novel *Maestro* demonstrates the long-lasting effects of regret'

Now this in itself is a functional essay topic, but to go deeper and write a better response you need to start asking yourself two things;

- Is this true/correct?
- What are these 'effects', or in terms of the original, what is this 'lasting power'?

How does the text represent this key idea/concern?

We have already unpacked the key terms, being the 'lasting power' of 'regrets'.

Now we must decide how the text represents this, because by knowing this you will be able to create a stronger statement.

First we looked at whether regret actually had any impact on the narrative/plot and the characters.

Paul, Keller, John, Nancy, Rick, Bennie
They all deal with regret in some way and it influences their actions and the narrative

Now that the credibility of this prompt has been established, we need to decide what the 'effects/lasting powers' of regret are, and whether they are presented as good, or bad.

The table we created in class looked like this;

Regret as having positive effects	Regret as having negative effects
Learning from mistakes/regrets	Traps people
Driving hunger for success	Drives to an unattainable goal causing more regret
Strengthening determination	Sadness/depression
	Causes sadness over things that cant be changed

	Loss
	Selfish

Now that we have established that the text does in fact deal with regret, and that it presents it as both good and bad in some ways there is only one thing to do. You need to decide what interpretation you have and how to argue it.

The interpretations we had of how *Maestro* presents regrets, were;

- Regret leads to learning
- You can't live without regrets
- You cant change the outcomes of your past actions
- Regret can be dangerous
- You shouldn't let regret consume you
- *Maestro* shows how our actions lead to regrets.

Making your very own, high quality prompt.

So we started with '***Maestro* shows us the lasting power of regrets.'**

What you need to do now is tell us what you think these 'lasting powers' are and include it in your re-working of the prompt.

So we took our interpretations of how the text presents regrets and came up with these statements, which rework the prompt to reflect them;

- *Maestro* demonstrates how regret leads to learning
- You can't live without regrets
- You cant change the outcomes of your past actions
- The lasting power of regret can be dangerous, as *Maestro* shows.
- *Maestro* teaches us that you shouldn't let regret consume you
- Our actions lead to regrets.

And that's it!

These are quality prompts that make it much more clear to any reader what you will be arguing for in your essay and also that you have understood the inherent complexity of a seemingly simple prompt.