

STASILAND

By Anna Funder

“Funder describes the Stasi as “innovators, story-makers and Faustian bargain-hunters”. How successful is she in this portrayal?

Faust was a medieval legend who sold his soul to the devil in exchange for power and knowledge. Faustian is an adjective used to describe this characteristic and behaviour

- **‘Innovators’** – surveillance techniques, techniques adopted to investigate people, a myriad of disguises, cameras hidden, “choreography for very nasty boy scouts”, smell jars, “tics of the ordinary man in the street”, “ballet of the death and dumb”....
- **‘Story-makers’** – files, consider the stories that the Stasi create about people such as Charlie, invention of people, informers and their stories....
- **‘Faustian bargain hunters’** – there were many Stasi who appeared to have sold their soul to the Devil. In particular, look at Von Schnitzler, Mielke and Honecker.

- 1.) Key Words – understand their meanings
- 2.) Turn topic into a question
- 3.) Your answer becomes your contention
- 4.) Optional - you might like to bring in SOME of the characters you will discuss OR a more general exploration of the Stasi regime
- 5.) Include the QUOTE from the topic
- 6.) Add other interesting quotes
- 7.) Look at the concept of ‘Alice in Wonderland’
- 8.) Writing technique – interviews with an element of bias
- 9.) Consider the IMPACT of the Stasi – lasting legacy are the victims
- 10.) Look at the tag – How successful is she in this portrayal?

Introduction:

- Author
- Title
- Place into context
- Narrative structure (p.12-13)
- Contention
- Consider including quotes

In Stasiland, as Anna Funder navigates her way through the "crooked" and "unmarked lanes" of Leipzig, she uncovers a grey, bleak city with its "tumbledown houses and bewildered people" that bathes itself in charmless brown and beige. As Funder acknowledges the "predominance of linoleum in her life", she discovers a land that is haemorrhaging from the aftermath of a Communist regime where "obedient grey men" practise their "quasi-scientific methods" on their innocent victims. The world Funder enters as an investigative journalist in post 1989 exposes the painful repercussions of the Stasi as they wielded their unforgiving laws upon a society that fell victim to their insidious ideological rule. Funder's biased narration and subsequent interviews with several former Stasi operatives, deliberately positions many of these men in a negative way and creates a vivid image of these men who "needed to know everything" and as "innovators, story-makers, and Faustian bargain-hunters" they truly come alive.

First Body Paragraph:

FOCUS: The 'Faustian' Stasi in their truest form; those that remained staunch believers in the regime.

TOPIC SENTENCE:

The Stasi was a bureaucracy "metastasised through East German society" and as Funder interviews these "obedient grey men" she positions the reader to share in the author's dislike for these callous and cruel men.

**While Funder exposes these stories, she, as a character, is a biased narrator as she deliberately positions many of these men in a negative way.*

**Through the use of vivid language combined with descriptive details of these old men, we cannot help but feel as though we too are in the presence of these old men.*

** The Stasi regime was scrupulous in its surveillance work and meticulously "obsessed with detail"*

**The former GDR is described by Funder as "the dream of a better world the German Communists wanted to build out of the ashes of their Nazi past". It is a land of pure nightmare; a place of surveillance, suppression and brutality.*

In your discussions, remember to draw upon **KEY WORDS** from the essay topic.....

Funder successfully portrays Von Schnitzler as **Faustian** as he appears to resemble Faust as he strives for worldly knowledge and power.

- **Von Schnitzler** – served in Hitler's army; his faith in the regime is steadfast; he is stubborn and his zealous belief in the Wall as "humane" and "necessary" shows how out of touch and corrupt his ideological beliefs actually are.
- *"The human antidote to the pernicious influence of western civilisation"*
- *"That man radiated so much nastiness he simply wasn't credible"*
- *"The most hated face of the regime"*
- *"The man who could turn inhumanity into humanity"*
- *"Filthy Ed"*
- *"A grumpy old puppet"*
- **Herr Winz** – is a man still playing spy games seven years after the fall of the Wall; he uses disguises and insists that Funder show him her identity card; out of touch with the world. Member of the Insiderkomitee and waiting for the "second coming of Socialism".
- *"He speaks in authoritative barks"*
- *"He is undercover, waiting for the second coming of Socialism"*
- *"Capitalism will not last! The revolution is coming"*
- *"Jowly as a hound-dog"*
- *"I am here to tell you about the excellent work – the masterful work-of the Stasi in counter-espionage"*
- **Herr Bock** – interrogates Funder, as though she is being interviewed by the Stasi; continues to wield his power; out of touch with the world. Like Herr Winz, he uses Stasi methods in his interview with Funder.
- *"Schooled in the art of convincing people to do things against their own self-interest"*
- *"We never thought that it would all come to an end"*
- *"This man with his brown cocoon and his conspiratorial room is unlikely to touch me, but I resent his enjoyment in having me at his mercy"*

As you write about these characters, remember to reflect on:

- Try to refer to some of the key words in essay topic
- Interesting observations
- Quotes from Funder and character
- Character description
- Symbolism – colour, setting, objects.....
- Narrative techniques – p.54 - 60 of booklet

Look at Stasi handout from group presentations

Second Body Paragraph:

FOCUS: The way the Stasi treated their victims

TOPIC SENTENCE:

Funder explores the lives blighted by the East German Stasi as victims' souls became buckled out of shape, forever.

**Funder's interview style is notably different when she speaks with the victims.*

**Look at the use of similes and metaphors to create vibrant, identifiable and believable characters and the pain they have experienced.*

**Funder's language gives their lives a richness and respect that they were denied under the Stasi.*

Funder becomes 'Anna in Stasiland', and as she tumbles down the rabbit hole she curiously finds her way just like 'Alice in Wonderland'.

- Miriam and Charlie
 - *"I became officially an enemy of the state at sixteen"*
 - *"When I got out of prison, I was basically no longer human"*
 - *"For eighteen months she was addressed by number and never by name"*
 - *"They would come and search the house from time to time"*
- Julia and Dieter
 - *"I simply couldn't get a job"*
 - *"It is true to say that from then on I sort of withdrew from things"*
 - *"It was exile"*
 - *"What else could they want?"*
 - *"A hermit crab....."*
- Frau Paul and Torsten
 - *"She starts to cry, so silently it is more like leaking"*
 - *"Mournful Magdalene"*
 - *"I was kidnapped right off the street"*
 - *"A lonely, teary guilt wracked wreck"*

You could examine the innovative and immoral nature of the Stasi and how they forced people to become informers, blackmailed people, fabricated stories about people (Charlie) and buckled their souls out of shape, forever.

- *"The contraption belonged further east and further back in time, in some Pythonesque sideshow of history".*
- *"There was something chilling about the office....."*

Third Body Paragraph:

FOCUS: Not all recruits of the GDR's internal army were corrupt.

TOPIC SENTENCE:

It cannot be concluded, however, that throughout Stasiland Funder maintains a portrayal of the Stasi men as sinister and apathetic. The author reveals that many of the men recruited to the Stasi did not carry out their career with sadistic delight, but for a misguided sense of duty to a country that had influenced their views and perceptions from early childhood.

Whilst Funder depicts Hagen Koch as a story-maker, it can be acknowledged that she recognises the men of the Stasi do not all conform to one mould. Not all Stasi men made a pack the devil.

- **Hagen Koch** – unable to move forward; lives his life in the shadow of the vanished Wall; devoted and fixated on the Wall; will not, cannot let go; he is consumed and defined by his past; a past created by the Stasi.
 - *"My story comes directly from my father's story"*
 - *"Like a ringmaster he gestures, welcome to the Wall Archive"*
 - *"The Stasi knew everything"*
 - *"The GDR was haemorrhaging"*
 - *"My little private revenge"*
 - *"All the courage I had is in that plate"*
 - *"A lone crusader against forgetting"*
 - *"A poster boy for the new regime"*
- **Herr Bohnsack** – socially isolated and friendless. He meets Anna in a public place and talks freely about his employment. He eventually outed himself to a local magazine.
 - *"He looks me straight in the eye and smiles a warm smile"*
 - *"A man without anything to prove"*
 - *"We knew the GDR was lost; it was a circus"*
 - *"Friends.....well I have none"*
 - *"I've fallen between two stools, you might say"*
- **Herr Christian** – "looking for an adventure". This meeting with Funder could not be more different than her rendezvous with Herr Winz; suggesting that the Stasi recruited all kinds of people for differing purposes. He has an acute sense of duty to obey the law.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“He has a crooked smile”</i> • <i>“It might lead to a bit of adventure”</i> • <i>“Anyone can have an affair, but everything must be reported”</i> • <i>“Being a blind man is the best way to observe people”</i>
<p>Fourth Body Paragraph:</p> <p>FOCUS: Look at how the Stasi impacted the land and its people.</p> <p>TOPIC SENTENCE:</p> <p><i>As Funder goes in search for stories of the East she observes “a silent crazy jungle under glass” with its “tumbledown houses and bewildered people”.</i></p> <p><i>*At times the author shifts from the first person narrative to a more formal style. This shift is necessary to provide the reader with historical background to the text, often to prepare the reader for the next stage of her storytelling.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the “horror-romance” observed by Funder as she travels through the new united Germany • Funder explains, “I shrank like Alice” • Community indecision about what to do with historical sites such as the Palast der Republik and Hitler’s Bunker • Changing the street names • The crumbling Wall • The empty Hohenschonhausen • Look at Funder’s reaction to the new Leipzig’s museum and the thought of putting history “behind glass” • Lack of colour • Linoleum • Expanse of grey concrete • “In unified Germany, most people want to pretend it (the Wall) was never there”
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>This is where you tie everything together, by re-stating your contention, but in different words. Your conclusion is meant to be a logical extension of what you have written.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider a broader observation about the text • Quotes can be well placed in a conclusion • Look at Author intent