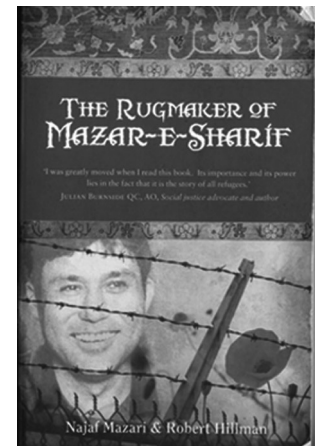


# Model 4

## The Rugmaker from Mazar-e-Sharif

**Najaf Mazari migrates to Australia from Afghanistan in 2001 and, as a persecuted Hazara (a Shiite muslim), seeks asylum. He leaves behind his memories and family members; he grieves the loss of his brother, Gorg Ali, who was a role model. In 1982, Gorg Ali died from a stray bullet during one of the many battles between the Russian army and the Afghan freedom fighters (the mujahedin).**



*In Afghanistan today, it is possible to listen to a story of heartbreak in the morning, hear a more heartbreaking story in the afternoon and in the evening, hear the worst story of all. It is not that Afghans have chosen a path of suffering out of madness; no, other people have chosen that path for us.*

*It was necessary for me to remain in hospital for three months while the wound was treated. The flesh of my leg had been torn open in the way that a plough cuts through the earth, leaving a pile of freshly-turned soil on either side of a trench. The doctors had sewn the living flesh back into the trench after cutting away the dead flesh. But the wound was not healing, and the pain it caused made me gasp and sweat and grit my teeth all through the day and night.*

*Around me in the crowded ward of the hospital lay people wounded in other battles, the victims of other catastrophes.*

*For Afghans, warfare had become a disaster so common that it was useless to think of it as something that could be avoided; it was more like earthquakes and floods and plague — catastrophes that you had to live with because they could not be controlled.*

*If I could have made my pain go away just by wishing, then of course I would have wished it away. But if I'd had just one wish and so had to choose between getting rid of the pain, or regaining the use of my leg, I would have said, "The pain I will endure, but let me keep my leg." I did not want to be a cripple for life. I have seen many cripples in Afghanistan. Legs are torn away; hands, whole arms, or sometimes all the limbs, leaving just the body.*

*When you are forced to remain in bed for a long time at a stretch, you might begin to use some of that time to think about life and God and the things that are of the most importance. I attempted to profit from this period of being bedridden by thinking of such matters of importance — at least, I did so when the pain was not too great and my anxiety was not overwhelming. 'Najaf,' I thought, 'if you cannot use your legs, at least use your mind.' And so I would reflect on great matters. I would think of God's creation in all of its wonder and beauty and of God's plan for me, and of the strange ways in which the plan was unfolding.*

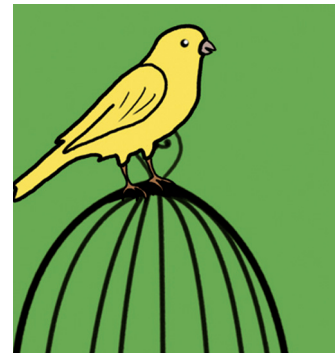
*But there was a problem for me, which other people in my position may also have encountered: the more I thought about great and important matters, the more I found myself, after about five minutes, wondering about things that were not nearly so great and important. Why have snakes no legs? How it is possible to see through certain solid things, like glass? Why is water colourless? How can flowers of the most brilliant colours bloom from dull brown earth? Whenever I found myself puzzling over these humble questions, I would shake my head and attempt to return to the great and important questions once more. But alas! — after another five minutes, I would be back with the legless snakes, or what that other baffling question: what was invented first, the hammer or the nail? After many fruitless attempts to understand life and God's plans, I realised that my brain could only enjoy such questioning if my hands had work to do. Otherwise, what was the use of knowing the answers to great questions? But at least this attempt to see into the mystery of things had one benefit, for I realised that a man is not what he thinks, nor what he says, but what he does with his hands and legs and with his heart.*

(Acknowledgements: Mazari Najaf, and Hillman, Robert. *The Rugmaker of Mazar-e-Sharif*. Melbourne: Wild Dingo Press, 2008.)

# A monologue

Najaf Mazari’s reflections on his life-threatening injury are written in the style of a monologue.

A monologue is a long speech spoken by someone in a play. It is not explicitly delivered to the audience or to another character but the words reveal the inner workings of their mind. Monologues can also appear in books and allow a glimpse into a character’s inner thoughts.



- ◆ A monologue enables a character to reveal things in a private manner. They might say things that surprise you — things about their background, upbringing, parents and early life.
- ◆ A character may be a witness to an accident and offer a different perspective. (Everyone sees the same events differently.)
- ◆ Your monologue must have a purpose and a focus. What is the character thinking about? What is bothering them or what are they angry about? Are they experiencing grief or guilt? What character traits are coming to the fore or need to be emphasised?
- ◆ If you are drawing upon a character in a text, a monologue-style format enables you to develop a heartfelt piece of writing, opening up spaces to reflect upon another author’s themes.
- ◆ **The “voice”** has to be distinctive; that is, it must reflect a character’s particular speech patterns, their tone and manner of speaking and their mood. What are their obsessions, fears and phobias, dreams and disappointments?
  - » See Model 2: Sybylla’s writing style is fresh and heart-felt; she reveals her heart-ache through specific sentence fragments and her frustrated tone.
  - » **Dramatic irony:** your character must appear to be revealing their innermost thoughts, but there are things they may not realise or know — things that readers may infer from their reactions and fears.
  - » **Self-talk strategies** can add another dimension. Authors often include italics to show a hidden layer of thought. Najaf makes a point of talking to himself: “‘Najaf,’ I thought, ‘if you cannot use your legs, at least use your mind.’ And so I would reflect on great matters.”
  - » Notice how Najaf conveys his insights about life; ironically, the more he tries to think of something deep and meaningful, the more he returns to simple or impossible questions.
  - » **Embedded narratives** can add a surprising perspective or provide a glimpse into a problem unknown to the character. For example, your character may read or write a letter or a diary excerpt, mull over their favourite passage in a novel, or hum a favourite refrain.

**Your structure:** your monologue must have a story-telling thread: a beginning, a middle and an end.

- » **Beginning:** Start with a “hook”. You could start in mid-sentence or in the middle of a problem. Or you could start at the end of a story and loop back to the beginning. You must clearly establish a context, that is a particular time and place.
- » **The middle:** You may include flashbacks or some “back story” (anecdotal recounts) which enable the character to reveal things about their background, attitudes, observations and experiences.
- » **The end:** You may loop back to the beginning, resolve the opening “problem”, and/or hint at a new one.

## Your monologue: a sudden change and an insight

**Your story:**  
write a story  
based on a crisis  
and strength.

A character in a crisis is a character with a story to tell. Difficulties or disappointments in life provide writers with interesting material for reflection. For example, you or someone you know may have experienced a personal or natural tragedy; a bush fire might lead to the loss of treasured items and a loss of security. In Model 4, Najaf is recuperating from an accident; he thinks about the consequences of his life-threatening injury.

If you have suffered some personal trauma, a sudden change in circumstances or a sense of loss this can be transferred to a fictional character, providing compelling insights and raw material for your writing.

- » Recount a difficult experience. How were you challenged and how did you deal with it? Think about your conflicting and contrasting emotions: you try to reach out to others, but you also develop a tendency to withdraw.
- » Write in a monologue reflective style. Pay particular attention to your tense sequences. (See p. 112)

### The frame: begin at an end point

**(Immediate past tense)** A group of neighbours has organised a farewell ceremony for your neighbour who died during the bushfires. A ceremony (releasing white balloons into the sky) gives you a sense of relief.

This event prompts reflection. You think back to that fateful day when, in the blink of an eye, your world changed.

#### 1. The cause/event: the fire or flood

**(A time change)** You remember snippets; some things sneak through the cracks of your memories. Some events take on nightmarish proportions. You have a misplaced sense of guilt.

#### 2. This leads to ...

Reflect on your experiences. You were losing control — saying and doing things you did not mean to. What did you do and why?

#### 3. And then, the most terrible thing of all ...

You finally cracked and did something shameful/awful; it was the catalyst for help.

You read a note, a letter, or an excerpt from a random novel which mirrors your feelings.

You reach out to someone who was there for you: a role model/friend/ a mentor. What is their advice?

### The frame: return to the end point

**(Immediate past tense)** In a loop-style narrative, you return to the ceremony: the white balloons are floating in the air. You have come a long way. What do you realise? What did you learn?

*Kirk Scott and Matthew Trimbone are survivors of a bushfire. They both have symptoms of anxiety and trauma; they both suffer from unpredictable panic attacks.*

*Kirk burrows in a bag of clothes in the corner of the room and refuses to talk to anyone; he shuts himself off from the teacher, from his friends and from the chaplain, who tries to earn his trust.*

*Matthew blamed himself for not having been brave enough during the fire. He blamed himself for the death of his neighbour, an elderly, rather eccentric, man, who he often mocked. He developed a panicked reaction to certain weather patterns such as heavy mist, or large red sunsets. He had nightmares.*

*Dr Paul Valent is a Holocaust survivor and a retired psychiatrist. He says it works this way: "Something major has happened that's implanted in the brain. It's like a big dark gravitational force. It's invisible but it's got enormous energy. You can't think about it, you can't talk about it, and you don't have words for it. It's overwhelming." Within weeks of suffering the trauma, the person becomes cut off from feelings that are too painful to deal with. But cutting off negative emotions also affects positive ones. There is sldo likely to be misplaced guilt. Valent says that children are prone to blaming themselves.*