

# Starting Concept Mapping Activities

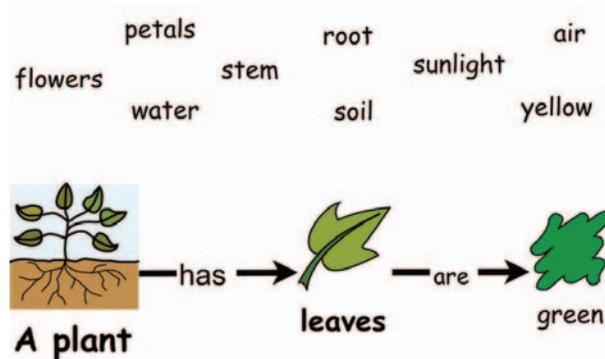
plant  
stem  
root  
leaves  
flowers  
sunlight  
green  
petals  
yellow  
water

1

Make a list of 10 to 12 related and familiar concept words, organising these from more general, more inclusive concepts to less general, more specific concepts. For example, plant, stem, root, leaves, flowers, sunlight, green, petals, yellow, water, air and soil would be a good set of related concepts.

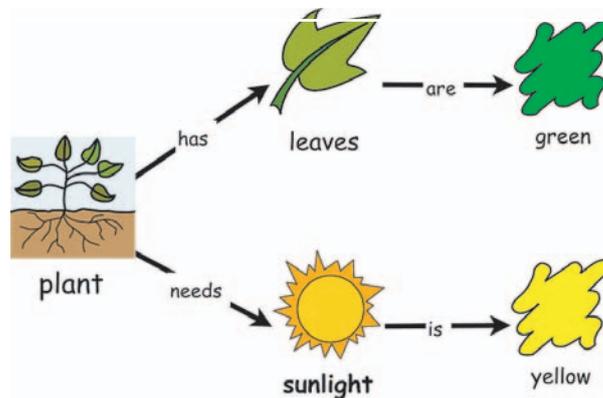
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Build a concept map on the whiteboard and introduce this as a 'game we are going to learn to play with words called concept mapping'



3

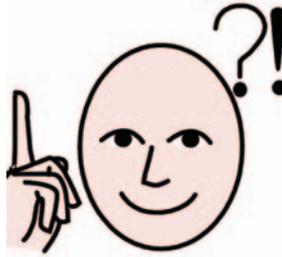
Have the children read out some of the short sentences (propositions) shown on the map.



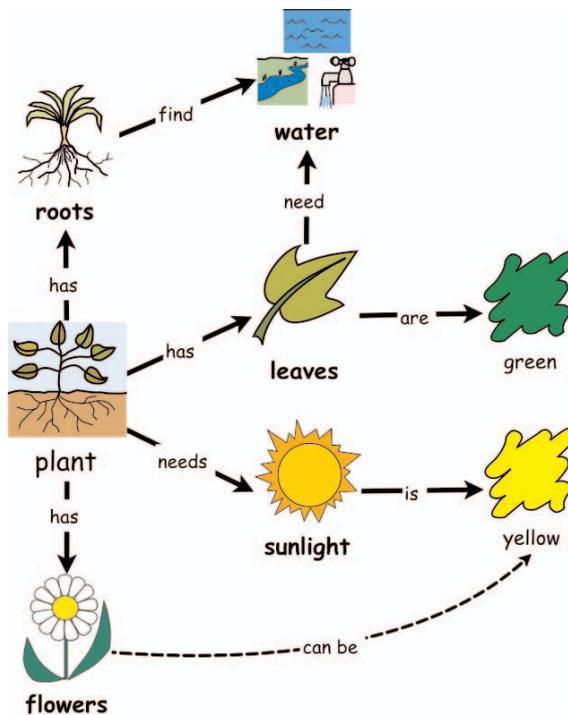
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Ask if anyone knows how to connect other concepts to the map, such as red, smell, rain, seeds.

# concept



- 5 See if anyone can suggest any cross links between the concepts added and the other concepts on the map.



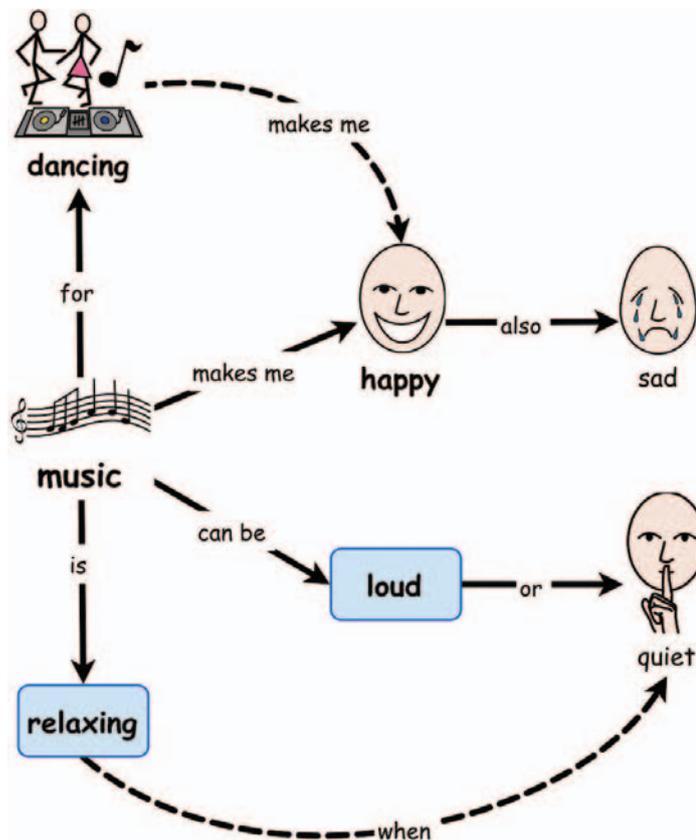
- 6 Ask the children to copy the map from the whiteboard, and add two or three of their own concepts (and cross links if they can).

7

transport	food	hobbies
sea	breakfast	sport
land	lunch	reading
air	dinner	music
car	snack	listening
aeroplane	tea	playing
bicycle	healthy	toys
submarine	favourite	television
hovercraft	horrible	cartoons
fast	treat	dancing
slow	drink	collecting

Give children lists of related words and have them construct their own concept maps. Children should be given the option of choosing which list of words they want to try and map.

8 If time permits, ask children to show their concept maps on the whiteboard and ask a few to explain the story of their concept map. Overemphasise the positive aspects and avoid criticism at this point, to make concept mapping a positive first experience. You will often find that pupils who do poorly at other class work will make good concept maps with good cross links (however they may misspell words or write illegibly). It would be a good opportunity to encourage these children by printing out their concept maps and displaying them on the wall for others to observe and share.



9 Take some time to point out the positive features of children's concept maps – especially good hierarchies and interesting cross links.

**10** Select a short (10 – 30 sentence) familiar story and print copies for all children. \* Help them to identify some of the concept words in the story and some of the linking words. Select a passage that has some meaning, that is, some message about the world or about people.

\* See sample handouts



- work
- day
- hard
- night
- sleep
- called
- floor
- cold

**11** Once upon a time there was an unhappy girl who lived with her father, stepmother and two step sisters.  
 She was made to work hard by day and sleep on the cold floor near the floor by night and that is how she came to be known as Cinderella.  
 One day an invitation arrived inviting ball held in honour of the prince. The Cinderella behind, sad and all alone.  
 Suddenly a fairy appeared. She dressed Cinderella in a beautiful gown, changed a pumpkin into a coach, and mice into horses.

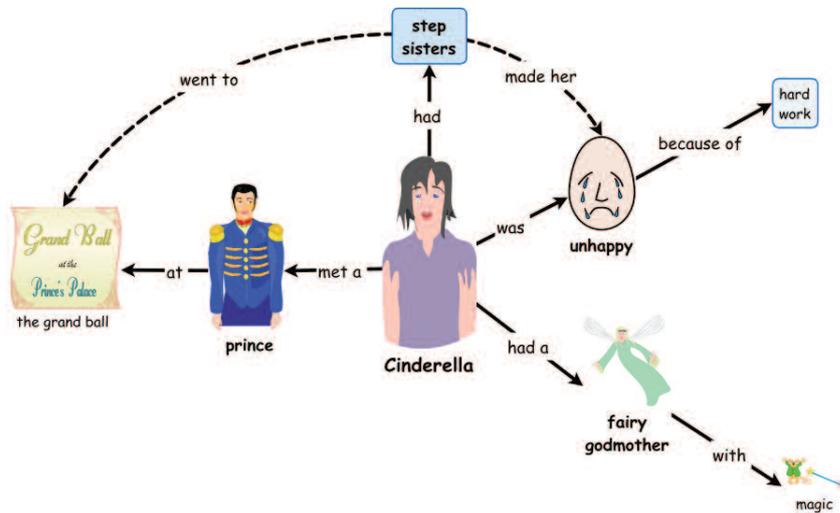


Ask the children which concepts are most needed to tell what the story is all about, and have them circle the key concepts in their own copy of the text.

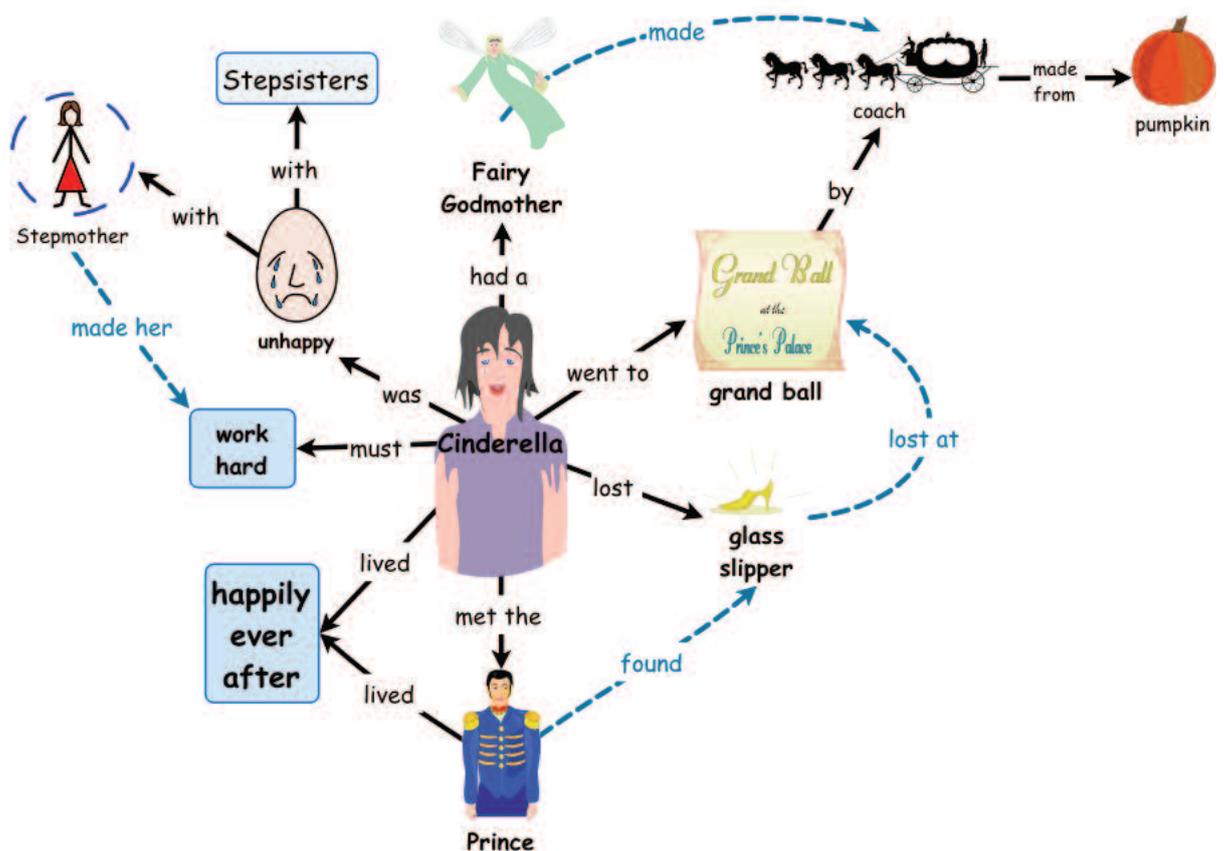
**12** Ask the children to prepare a list of concepts from the story, listing first the concepts that are most important to the story, and going down the list to concepts that are less important.

- once upon a time
  - unhappy
  - hard work
  - invitation
  - grand ball
  - fairy
  - prince
  - lost shoe
  - happily ever after
  - stepmother
  - stepsisters
  - cold floor
  - fire
  - gown
  - coach
  - horses
  - palace
  - midnight
  - father
  - beautiful
  - pumpkin
  - mice
  - ran away
- Cinderella**

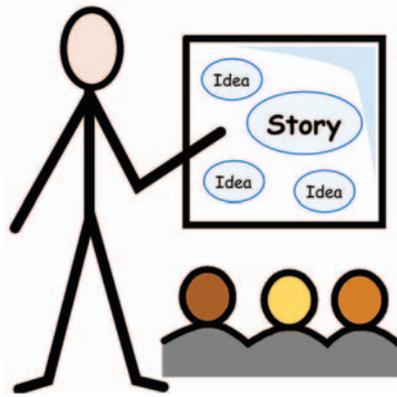
**13** Discuss the children's list and then construct with them a concept map for the story.



- 14 Have the children construct their own concept map for the story using activities similar to those you used constructing the concept maps from lists of related words.



- 15 Choose new stories (two or more) and print copies for the children. Have children select a story and replicate the activities you have done as a class: circle the key concept words; prepare a list of concept words from most important to least important and draw a concept map for their chosen story.



**16** Ask some children to read their stories to the class using only their concept map. See if the class can determine what the story is about.

**17** Concept maps can be printed out and displayed together with the story for others to see.

Once upon a time there was an unhappy girl who lived with her father, stepmother and two step sisters.

She was made to work hard by day and sleep on the cold floor near the floor by night and that is how she came to be known as Cinderella.

One day an invitation arrived inviting everyone to a grand ball held in honour of the prince. Then off they went leaving Cinderella behind, sad and all alone.

Suddenly a fairy appeared. She dressed Cinderella in a beautiful gown, changed a pumpkin into a coach, and mice into horses.

So off went Cinderella to the palace. As soon as the prince saw her he asked her to dance and would dance with no other all night.

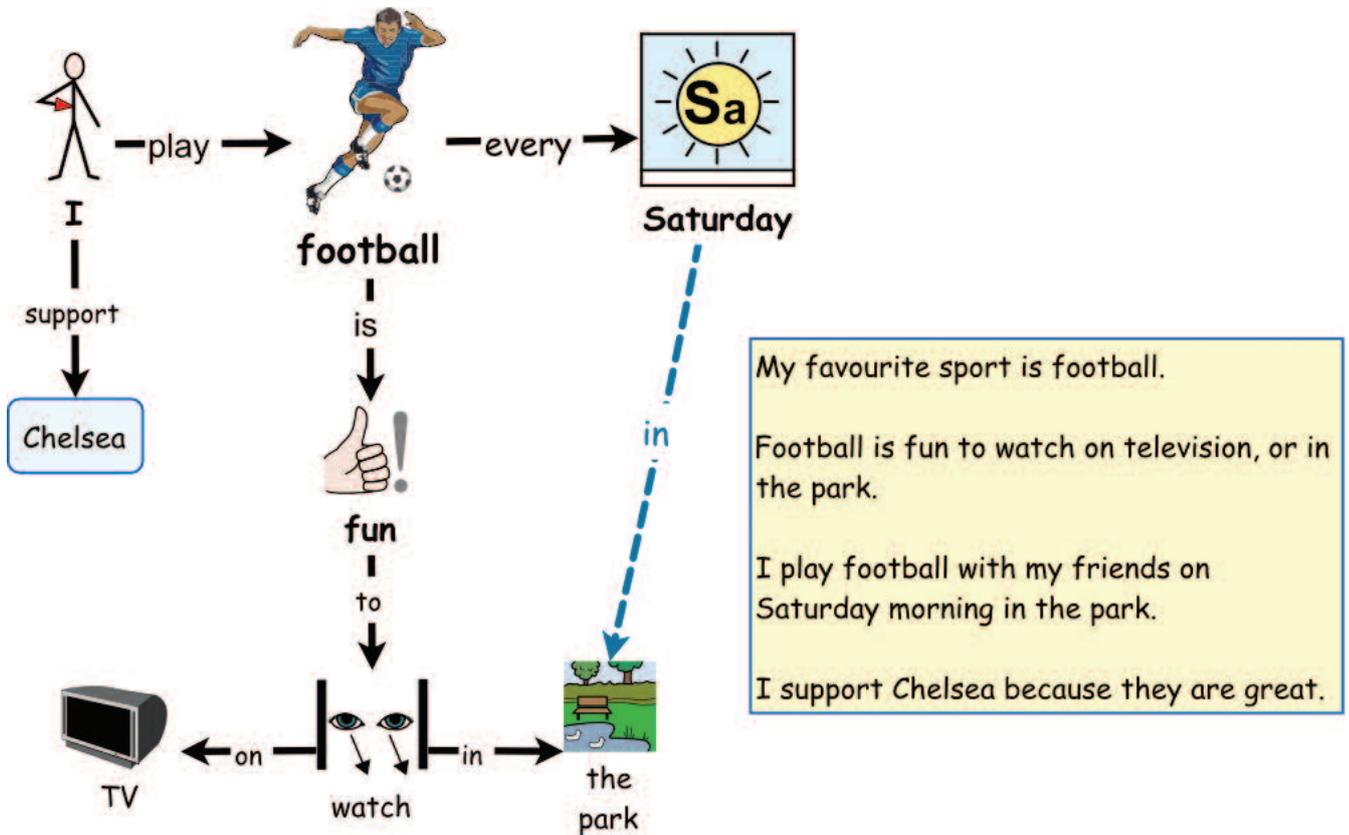
However, at midnight, Cinderella ran from the prince but she lost one of her shoes. The prince searched for the owner of the shoe.

Finally he found Cinderella and they lived happily ever after.

**18** Ask children to prepare a concept map for something they know most about (e.g. football, a film or story, swimming, playing the recorder, motor racing) and present it to the class using the whiteboard. As with the previous maps, emphasise the positive points and avoid negative criticism. (Other children will usually offer plenty of this.)



- 19 Ask the children to write a short story based on their concept maps. Some of these might be read to the class.



- 20 From here, almost any classroom activity can be related to concepts and concept maps. You can use concept maps to introduce and develop the teaching of any topic or activity. You can encourage children to paper the walls of the classroom with concept maps that relate to any specific classroom activity. Help them to see that one concept map can be linked to another and that all concepts are in some way linked to each other. Cross linking of concepts is what makes us 'clever' and able to think like a human.

- 21 Use of concept maps is very valuable in both formative and summative assessment. Children can demonstrate meaningful learning by comparing a concept map they have created at the beginning of a teaching topic with a second one done at the end of that topic. There should be a big difference in both the extent of concepts used and the cross linking between those concepts. Concept mapping is a great forensic tool for a teacher to use in revealing common pupil misconceptions and misunderstanding.