

## Augustana College

### EDUC 335 Reading in the Content Field: Secondary

Concepts addressed:  
CONCEPT MAPPING

Concept maps represent information visually in the form of a web diagram by graphically illustrating relationships between information and linking two or more concepts by words that describe their relationship. Concept maps capitalize on the power of our vision to understand complex information. The primary function of the brain is to make meaning of information. When information is presented in visual formats, it is easier for our brain to comprehend the information; concept maps offer one method to do this. Concept maps encourage understanding by helping students organize and enhance their knowledge of the topic and help students learn new information by integrating new ideas into their existing body of knowledge.

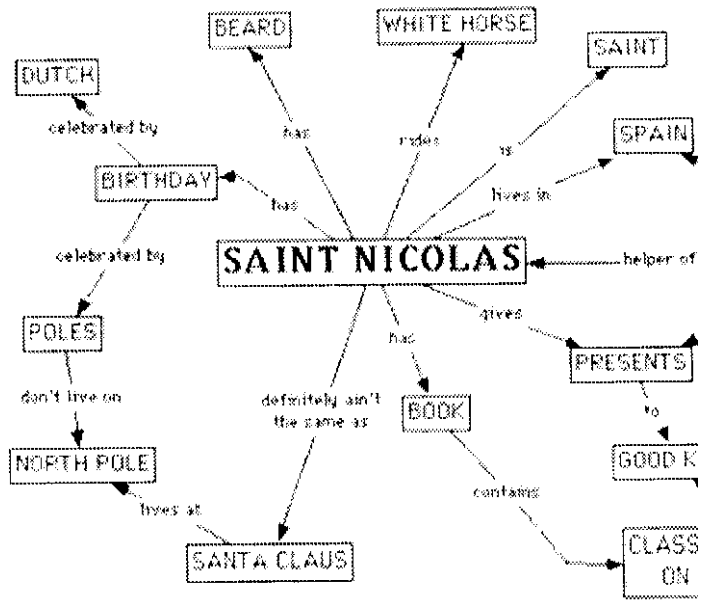
Prof. Joseph D. Novak at Cornell University developed concept mapping in the 1960s; Novak based his work upon Ausubel's theories who stressed the important role prior knowledge plays in learning new concepts.

A concept map is a network of concepts using nodes and links. Nodes represent concepts and links represent the relationship between concepts. The links are labeled, denote direction with an arrow symbol which depicts the relationship, and explain the relationship between the nodes.

Concept mapping can be employed to develop an understanding of a body of knowledge, explore new information and relationships, access prior knowledge, gather and learn new knowledge/information, share knowledge/information, generate ideas, communicate complex ideas, and or to assess learning or reveal misunderstandings.

Some suggestions to consider when using concept maps include to work from the general to specific or use a free association approach through brainstorming and to use different colors/shapes to identify different types of information or to distinguish prior and new information.

Concept maps can be used anytime during the instructional process. At a unit's beginning, a concept map can help to determine prior knowledge of the concept. During instruction they can help students to organize information, clarify procedures of a project, and/or to highlight subordinate concepts relating to the overall topic. At the end of a unit, concept maps can serve as a review for a test. When and how to use concept map is up to the teacher and can be used by individuals, partners, small groups, or the whole class. A sample concept map follows:



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