

Concept Maps (sometimes called mind maps, bubble maps, or webbing)

A concept is simply an idea. A concept map is a special form of a diagram for exploring knowledge and gathering and sharing information. The purpose of a concept map is usually to explore an idea further, or to fully explore a question. A concept map consists of cells (bubbles) that contain a concept (idea), item or question and links. The links are labeled and usually have an arrow symbol. The labeled links explain the relationship between the cells. The arrow describes the direction of the relationship and so it can sometimes be read like a sentence.

Uses for concept maps:

- Develop an understanding of a body of knowledge. Explore new information and relationships. Access prior knowledge. Gather new knowledge and information. Share knowledge and information generated. Design structures or processes such as written documents, constructions, web sites, web search, multimedia presentations. Problem solve options.

Critical Questions:

- When beginning a concept map, decide what is the central word, concept, research question or problem around which to build the map?
- What are the concepts, items, descriptive words or telling questions that you can associate with the concept?

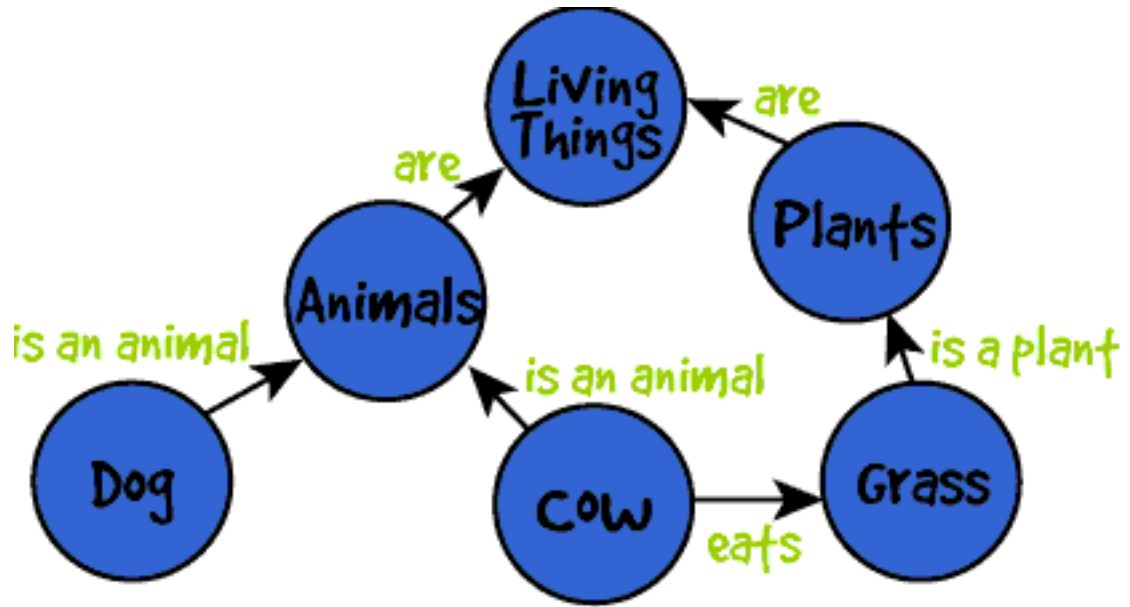
You may already have some experience with concept maps from elementary school.

You can create concept maps by hand, but there are many great web tools that can do this as well. There are several benefits to using web-based tools to create concept maps:

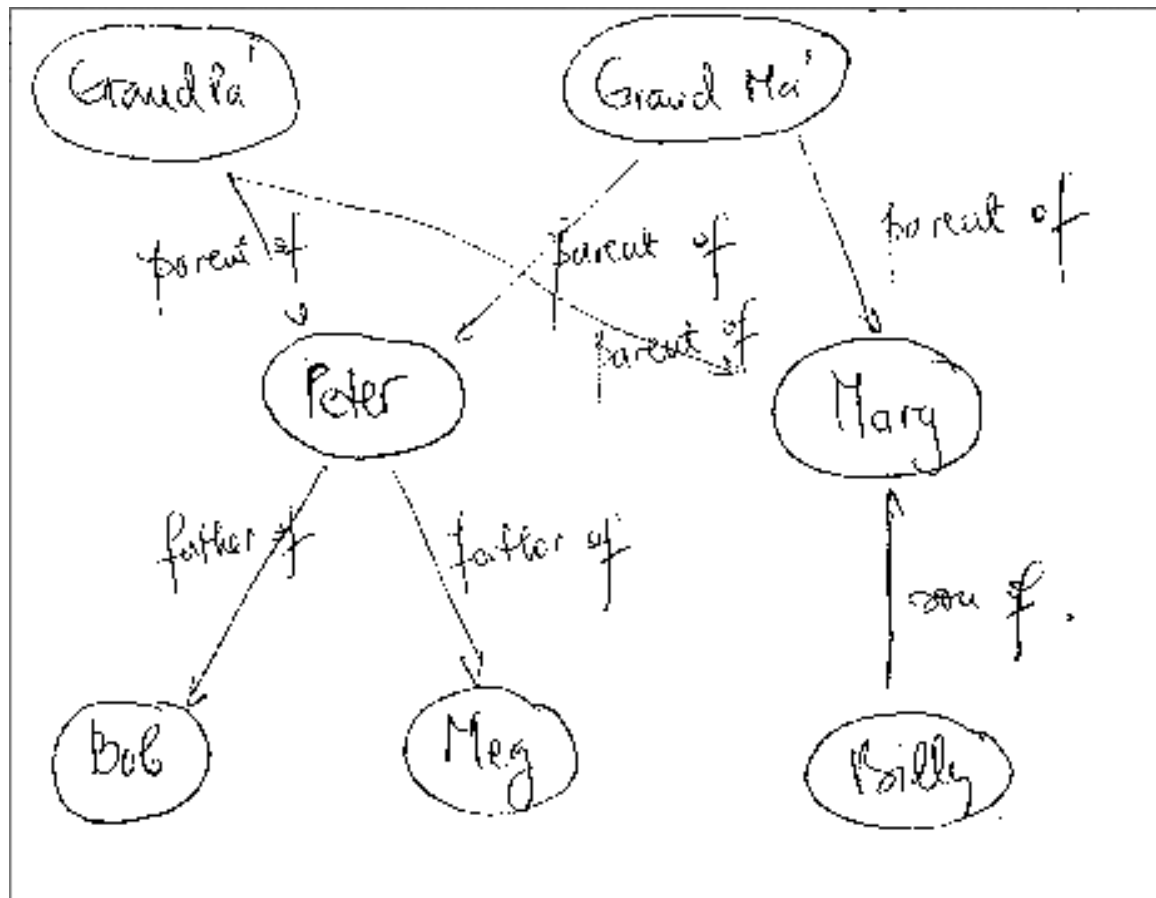
1. You can access them anywhere you have an internet connection.
2. They can be as big as you want – your map is not limited to the size of a piece of paper.
3. They can be shared and worked on with others.
4. You can use colorful graphics and images to help you explore an idea.

Below are some examples of concept maps – most of these are fairly simple maps, but you can see that they are all quite different in how they go about organizing ideas. There is no one right way to do a concept map, but there are some tools to give you some ideas about where to start. In each of the links in this lesson, you can find examples of concept maps created with that particular software tool. Be sure to check them out.

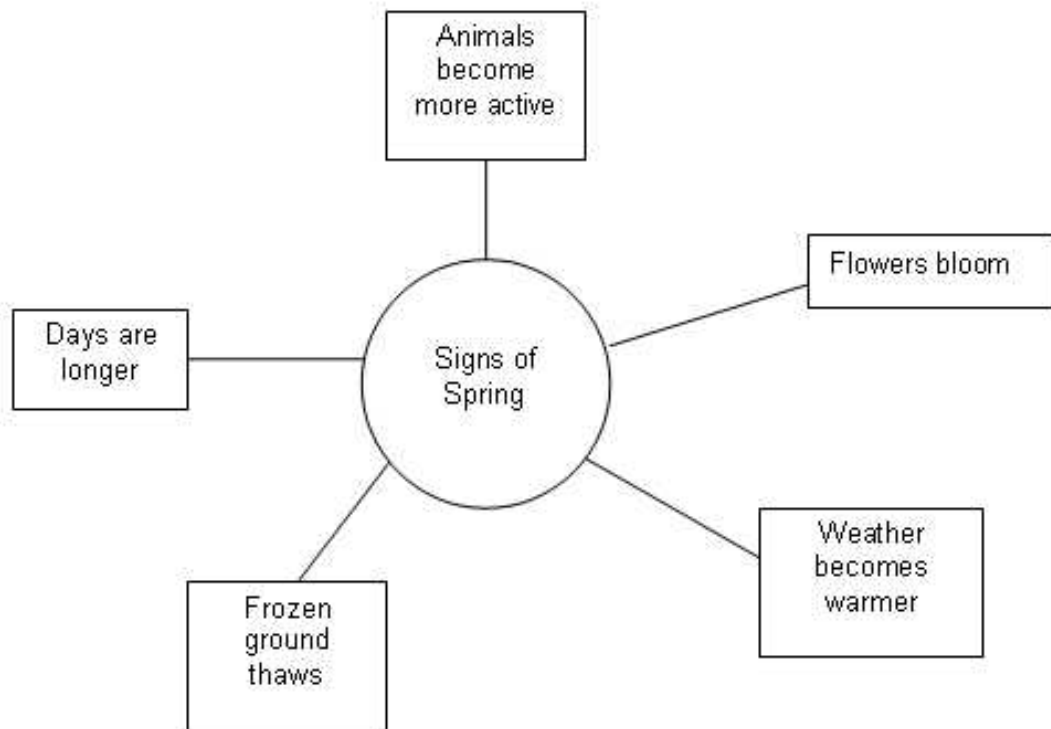
This simple map explores the idea of living things.



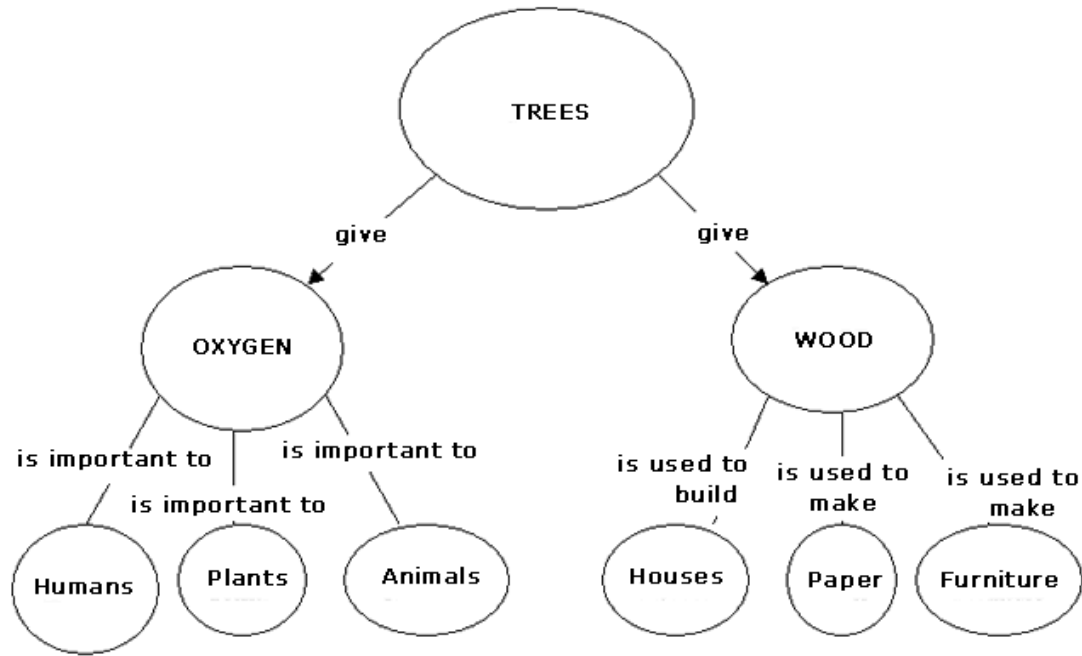
This simple map shows relationships in a family tree:



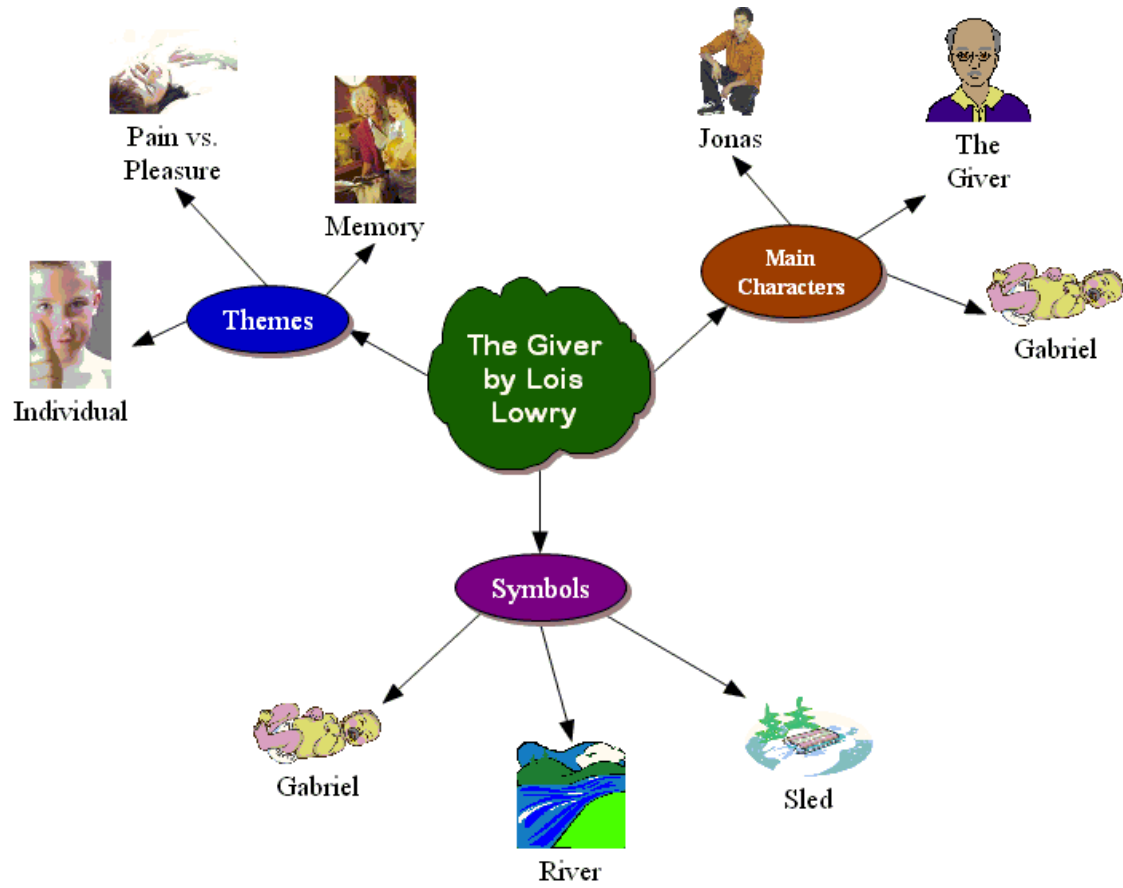
This is a concept map done on a computer – it begins to answer the question, “What are some signs of spring?”



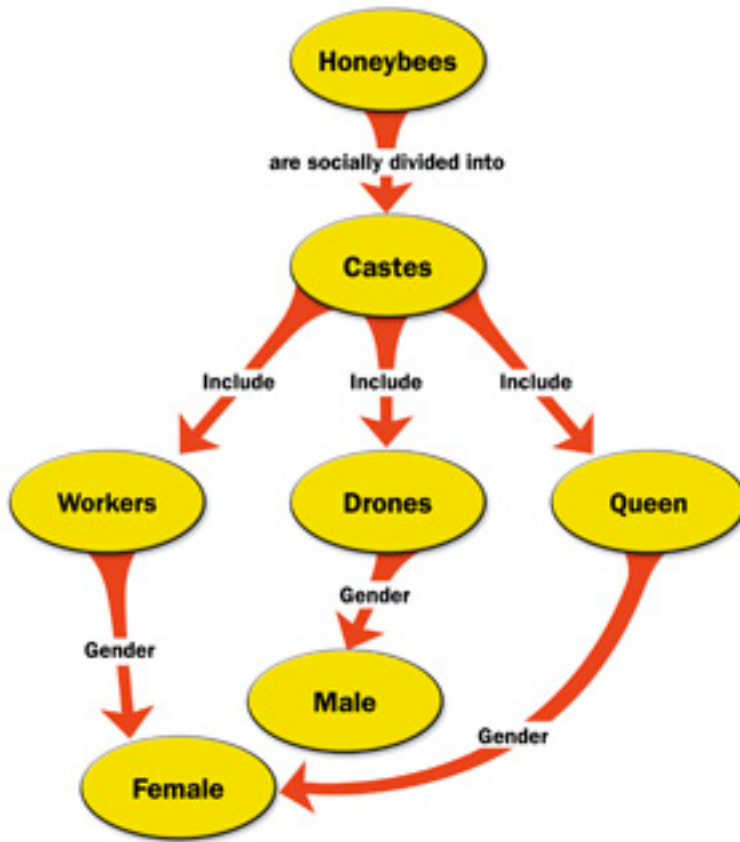
Here is another digital concept map that explores the question, “How can trees help us?”



Some digital and web-based concept map (mind mapping) tools allow you to use pictures to help represent ideas. This map explores the major characters, themes and symbols in the novel, The Giver, by Lois Lowry.



Some digital and web based mapping tools allow you to use colorful graphics to make your ideas really stand out. This map used for a science class explores the societal structure of honeybees.



Some digital and web-based tools allow you to use a combination of graphics and images to explore ideas. The map below explores the question, “What are police powers?”

