

Strategy 2 Main Idea Clusters

Many students struggle to find the main idea as they read. This further complicates student comprehension and retention of the material that is read.

Practice: Fill out the template on page 18 before, during and after reading. Share the completed cluster with others at the table discuss the main idea of the piece.

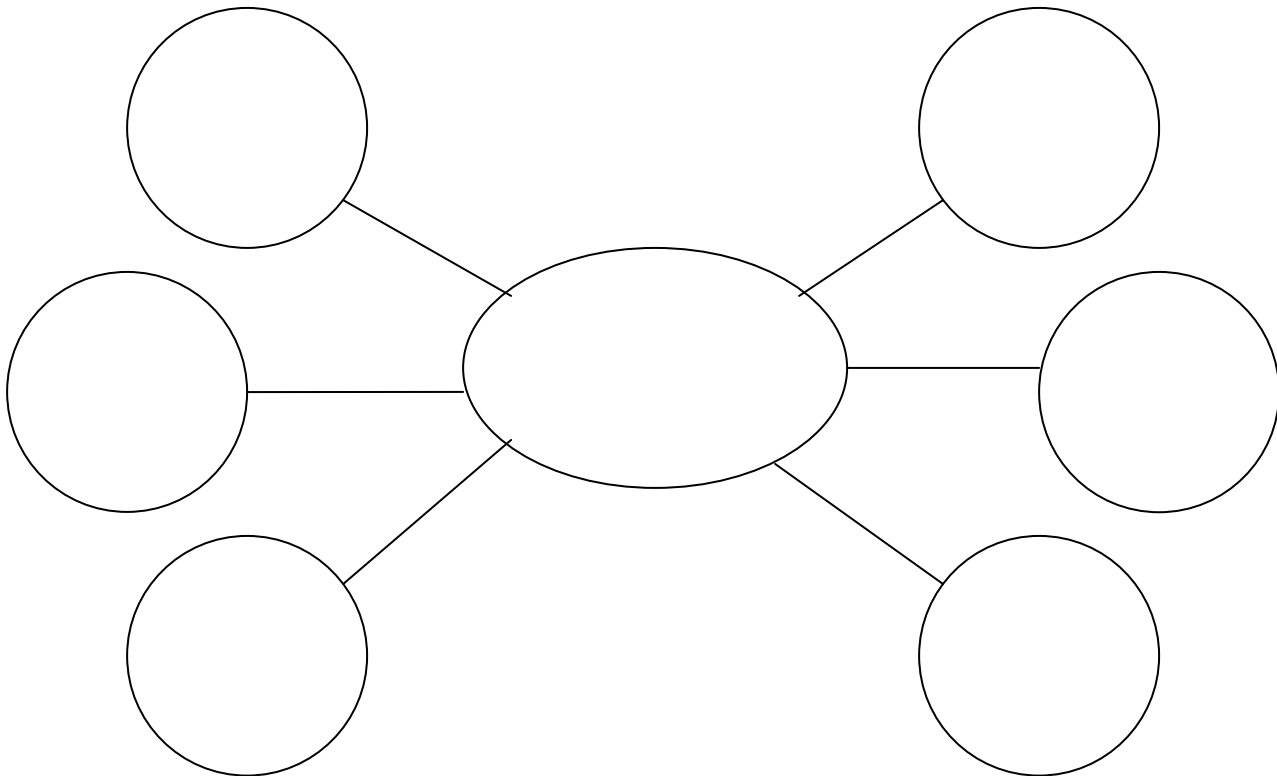
Practice: With other participants, create two more questions for each quadrant for the example above. Then write them on chart paper and post on the wall. Choose a group spokesperson that will share the questions and answers with the whole group.

Assessment: Teacher assessment of this strategy would occur after students have mastered the technique on their own. Teachers would assess the depth of the questions created and the ability of the students to extract further meaning and make connections.

AP teachers can adapt this strategy for use with primary documents or argumentative readings. AP teachers would assess the depth and sophistication of an AP student's questions and answers. Pre-AP and AP teachers can use student-generated questions from this exercise for quizzes or written assessment.

Prediction: Before you begin to read the selection, look at the main title, scan the pages to read the major headings, and look at any illustrations. In the middle bubble, write down your prediction about what the sort or article will cover.

Main Ideas: As you finish reading each paragraph or key section of the passage, summarize the main idea of that paragraph or section in one or two complete sentences. Write those main ideas in the left hand bubbles.



Writing Questions: For each main idea listed, write down at least one *question* that the main idea will answer. Good questions should include would like “who, “where”, “when”, “why”, and “what.” Write these questions in the right hand bubbles.

Clarifying: Copy down any words, phrases, or sentences in the passage that are unclear:

Final Thoughts: Reassess your prediction of this text. Were you correct? Incorrect? Almost there?

What led you to believe that you were making an educated prediction about the text?

Now that you have read the text, would you change what you wrote in the center bubble if so, what would your new entry say?

Assessment: Teachers would assess both clarity and level of student understanding for main ideas and questions. Close attention should be paid to the last section of the worksheet that asks for students to list items for which they need clarification. Teachers should go over these items with students to ensure understanding of the text.