

Vocabulary map

Teaching strategies for reading comprehension



Best for:

- Year level: 3–9
- Phase of learning: deep

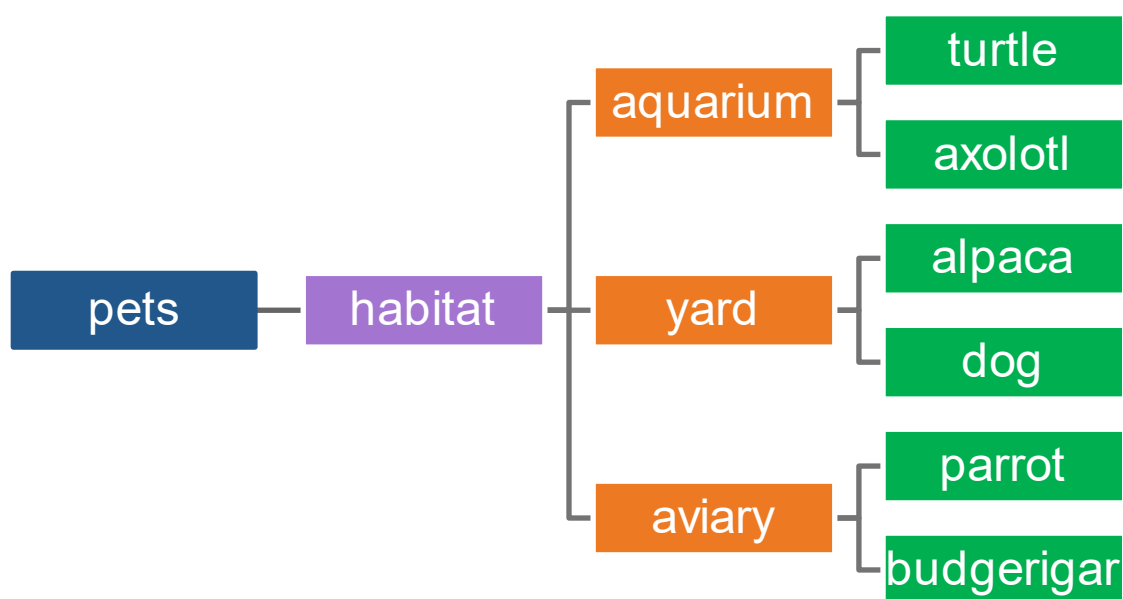
Overview

Description	Students categorise words and phrases associated with a known topic to create a vocabulary map. It works especially well as a group activity. This strategy is suitable when students have sufficient shared knowledge about a theme or topic, e.g. greetings in different languages, the solar system. It can be used at the end of a unit to revise content.
Learning focus (based on National Literacy Learning Progression)	Comprehension <ul style="list-style-type: none">• locate directly stated information (UnT5)• draw inferences and explain using background knowledge or text features (UnT6)• integrate new learning from reading with current knowledge (UnT6)• locate information or details embedded in the text (UnT7)• identify main idea and related or supporting ideas in moderately complex texts (UnT8)• build meaning by actively linking ideas from several print or digital texts (UnT9)• distil information from several texts according to task and purpose (UnT9) Processes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• use a process such as connecting relevant elements of the text to build meaning (UnT9) Vocabulary <ul style="list-style-type: none">• identify key words and the meanings they carry (UnT5)• identify the way that technical and discipline-specific words develop meaning in texts (UnT8)
Teacher preparation	Select a text related to the unit being studied; one that contains frequent, learning area-specific vocabulary (sometimes called Tier 3 words).

Suggested implementation

1. Introduce the selected text, then read it aloud or silently. If students encounter unfamiliar words, support them to draw on their relevant phonic and morphemic knowledge.
2. Ask students to work individually or in pairs to highlight key words/phrases from the text.
3. Bring students together as a whole group and write words/phrases on sticky notes or an interactive whiteboard; this activity works best when the words can be moved around easily.
4. Model the process of creating a vocabulary web, e.g. using a simple but familiar topic such as pets. Emphasise the importance of determining relationships between words, especially the top-level organiser (or superordinate) and grouping connected words, e.g. pets that need an aquarium, yard or aviary. See the figure below as well as the extended model in the appendix — note the use of colour to signal relationships between words (orange for types of habitats and green for the names of animals).

Simple vocabulary map for pets



5. Ask students to work in small groups to create a vocabulary map for the learning-area vocabulary identified in the text. This process works best if students have cards on which to write individual words/phrases. These can then be moved around and sorted easily before committing anything to paper or screen. Students may add new words and phrases not indicated on the board, if needed. For example, in the model in the appendix, the Sun and celestial bodies are implied without being mentioned specifically in the NASA text. Students should refer to the text to check relationships and resolve issues, although they should also draw on their background knowledge as required.
6. Consider how to treat the remaining words/phrases when students have categorised as many as possible.
7. Share vocabulary maps and ask groups to describe their reasoning for the categories they used and their sorting. For example, ask each group to record their vocabulary maps on sheets of butchers' paper and put them up on the wall when finished. Groups review the other vocabulary maps and note differences and similarities with their own. Lead a class discussion of the differences and similarities in students' thinking.
8. Provide time for students to refine their vocabulary maps. Students continue to refine and extend their maps as they read more texts on the topic.

Variations

- A Use the vocabulary map as a revision activity. Ask students to recall words or phrases related to the topic they have covered in the unit and then create the vocabulary map.
- B Use the strategy 'Understanding concepts through texts' to consolidate and deepen understanding of important concepts. Students can identify and discuss the differences between a vocabulary map and a concept web, including their different purposes.
- C Use the strategy in reverse. Students working in groups draw on their combined background knowledge (developed through a unit) to create a vocabulary map of all the words they know associated with a particular topic, e.g. all the Japanese words they know associated with the topic of 'family'. Then, read a Japanese language text on that topic. Discuss how background knowledge supports reading (and listening and viewing).
- D Introduce students to other ways of visualising vocabulary and concepts, especially:
 - Frayer charts
 - NSW Department of Education 'Frayer diagram' webpage:
<https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/553>
 - Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction 'Frayer model' webpage:
https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/ela/bank/6-12_L.VAU_Frayer_Model.pdf
- E Concept definition map, see the Scholastic webpage 'Using a concept definition map':
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/reading/bestpractices/vocabulary/pdf/concept.pdf>.

Acknowledgment

This strategy draws on ideas from Johnson, D & Pearson, P 1978, *Teaching Reading Vocabulary*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, USA.

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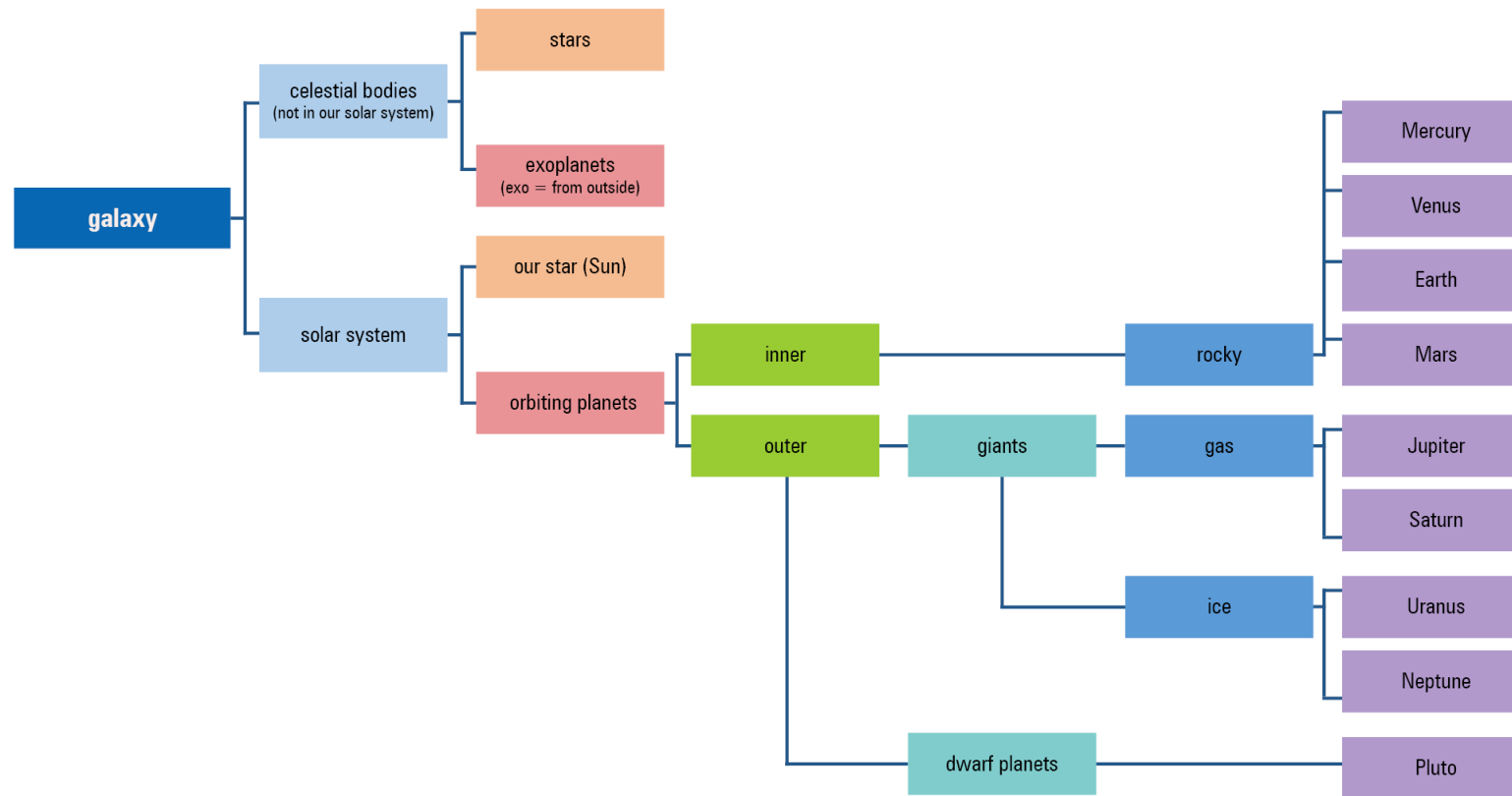
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Appendix 1: Vocabulary map extended model

The following is a vocabulary map based on reading an overview of planets on the [NASA website](https://www.nasa.gov). Note the use of colours to represent related vocabulary, e.g. rocky, gas and ice (in blue) are all related to the matter of which the planets (in purple) are made.



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