

## Concept Maps

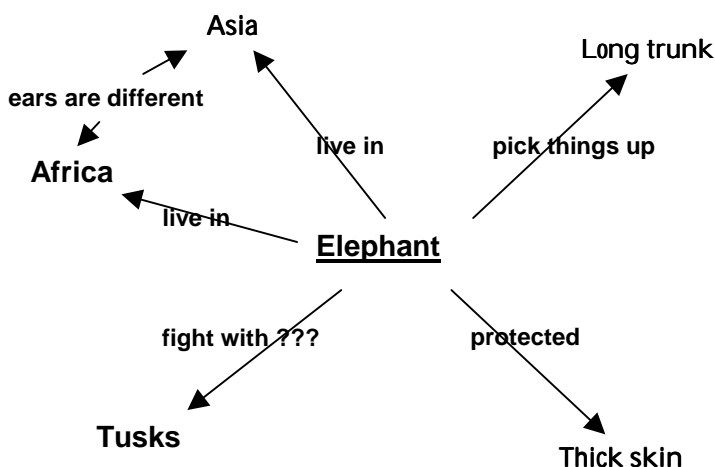
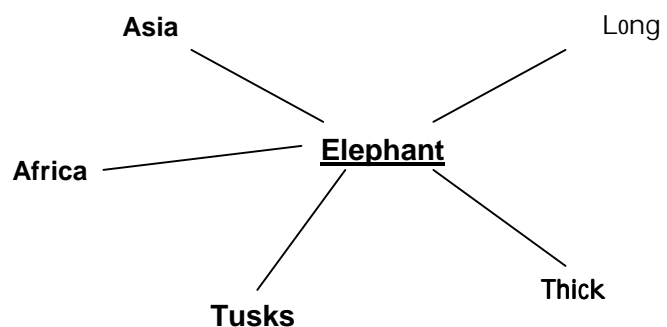
Concept maps are perhaps most effective in knowledge-based units of work. They can be used to help children review their current knowledge and understanding in the early stages of a unit. Concept maps can also quite usefully be revisited or repeated during and towards the end of the work, helping children to recognise the progress they are making, or have made.

Some teachers find it productive to display the initial maps, and children delight in pointing out what they did not know then, but know now. Others encourage the children to enter new ideas or further links onto their maps, in a colour different from the one initially used, so illustrating their growing knowledge and understanding.

All of this supports the view that concept mapping can be an interesting and valuable way of involving children in their own learning.

A concept map will typically focus on a theme. This could be as wide ranging as 'Earth in Space'. It would include lots of names, technical terms and links to show relationships. Equally the map could have a narrower focus such as 'Tudor Homes', and cover one or two well known examples, some key features, and some comparisons with modern homes.

Depending on how children are taught to map their concepts, the end product can often look like a 'topic web'. Here the child has begun to explore and record their knowledge about the elephant.

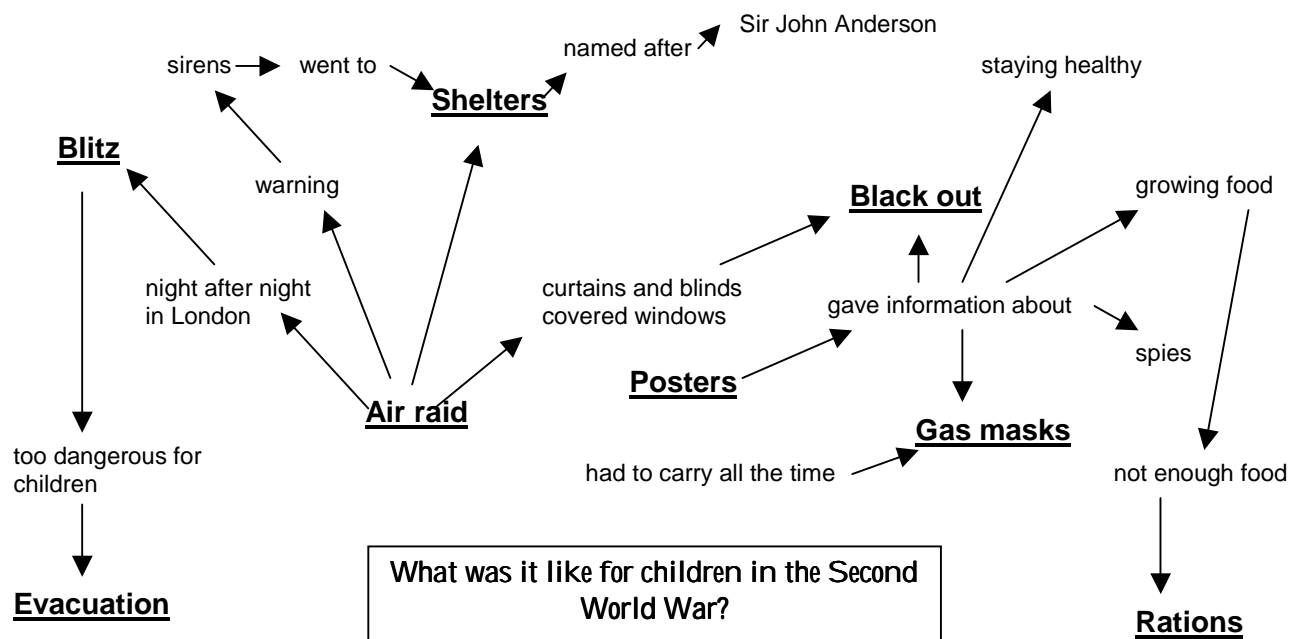


In this example the child has been encouraged to adopt a more sophisticated approach, by briefly creating and explaining relationship links between the central theme and the things they know. At this level, the directional arrows become important.

A further development in concept mapping involves the children being given some prompt words to use in creating relationship links. These words could well have been derived from a whole class brainstorming session, or from another initial stimulus such as a video recording.

History Unit 9: What was it like for children in the Second World War?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rations</li> <li>○ Evacuation</li> <li>○ Gas mask</li> <li>○ Air raid</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Black out</li> <li>○ Shelter</li> <li>○ Blitz</li> <li>○ Posters</li> </ul>

The children are then free to use these words, along with any others they want to include, to record their current knowledge. They indicate links, and try to use arrows to show the flow of their thoughts. Used well, concept mapping can become a form of shorthand or note taking.



Used at the beginning of a unit of work, at times during the project or at the end concept maps give teachers, and the children themselves, a very clear insight into a child's understanding, and can also highlight gaps or misconceptions.