Concept Mapping

"Concept-Mapping" is a tool for enhancing our thinking and learning. This is particularly helpful for essays. To do a Map, write the main idea in the centre of the page -- it may be a word, a phrase, or a couple of ideas, -- then place related ideas on branches that radiate from this central idea.

How to do a Map

Print in capitals, for ease of reading. This will also encourage you to keep the points brief.

Use unlined paper. If you must use lined paper, turn it so the lines are vertical.

Use paper with no previous writing on it.

Connect all words or phrases or lists with lines, to the centre or to other "branches." When you get a new idea, start again with a new "spoke" from the centre.

Go quickly, without pausing -- try to keep up with the flow of ideas. Do not stop to decide where something should go i.e. to order or organise material --just get it down.

Write down everything you can think of without judging or editing -- these activities will also disrupt the Mapping process.

If you come to a standstill, look over what you have done to see if you have left anything out.

You may want to use color-coding, to group sections of the Map.

Some Organizational Patterns That May Appear in a Concept-Map

Branches. An idea may branch many times to include both closely and distantly related ideas.

Arrows. You may want to use arrows to join ideas from different branches.

Groupings. If a number of branches contain related ideas, you may want to draw a circle around

Organization Practice -- Sequential Diagram –- An Example

The cattle tick is a small, flat-bodied, blood-sucking arachnid with a curious life history. It emerges from the egg not yet fully developed, lacking a pair of legs and sex organs. In this state it is still capable of attacking cold-blooded animals such as frogs and lizards, which it does. After shedding its skin several times, it acquires its missing organs, mates, and is then prepared to attack warm-blooded animals.

The eyeless female is directed to the tip of a twig on a bush by her photosensitive skin, and there she stays through darkness and light, through fair weather and foul, waiting for the moment that will fulfill her existence. In the Zoological Institute at Rostock, prior to World War I, ticks were kept on the end of twigs, waiting for this moment for a period of eighteen years. The metabolism of the creature is sluggish to the point of being suspended entirely. The sperm she received in the act of mating remains bundled into capsules where it, too, waits in suspension until mammalian blood reaches the stomach of the tick, at which time the capsules break, the sperm are released, and they fertilize the eggs which have been reposing in the ovary, also waiting a kind of time suspension.

The signal for which the tick waits is the scent of butyric acid, a substance present in the sweat of all mammals. This is the only experience that will trigger time into existence for the tick.

The tick represents, in the conduct of its life, a kind of apotheosis of subjective time perception. For a period as long as eighteen years nothing happens. The period passes as a single moment; but at any moment within this span of literally senseless existence, when the animal becomes aware of the scent of butyric acid it is trust into a perception of time, and other signals are suddenly perceived.

The animal then hurls itself in the direction of the scent. The object on which the tick lands at the end of this leap must be warm; a delicate sense of temperature is suddenly mobilized and so informs the creature. If the object is not warm, the tick will drop off and re-climb its perch. If it is warm, the tick burrows its head deeply into the skin and slowly pumps itself full of blood. Experiments made at Rostock with membranes filled with fluids other than blood proved that the tick lacks all sense of taste, and once the membrane is perforated the animal will drink any fluid, provided it is of the right temperature.

The extraordinary preparedness of this creature for that moment of time during which it will re-enact the purpose of its life contrasts strikingly with probability that this moment will ever occur. There are doubtless many bushes on which ticks perch, which are never bypassed by a mammal within range of the tick's leap. As do most animals, the tick lives in an absurdly unfavourable world -- at least so it would appear to the compassionate human observer. But this world is merely the environment of the animal. The world it perceives – which experimenters at Rostock call its "umwelt," its perceptual world -- it not at all unfavourable. A period of eighteen years, as measured objectively by the tick. During this period, it is apparently unaware of temperature changes. Being blind, it does not see the leaves shrivel and fall and then renew themselves on the bush where it is affixed. Unaware of time, it is also unaware of space. It waits, suspended in duration for its particular moment of time, a moment distinguished by being filled with a single, unique experience; the scent of butyric acid.

Though we consider ourselves far removed as humans from such a lowly insect form as this, we too are both aware and unaware of elements that comprise our environment. We are more aware than the tick of the passage of time. We are subjectively aware of the aging process; we know that we grow older, that time is shortened by each passing moment. For the tick, however, this moment that precedes it burst of volitional activity, the moment when it scents butyric acid and it thrust into purposeful movement, is close to the end of time for the tick. When it fills itself with blood, it drops from its host, lays its eggs and dies.

The following is an example of how the above information can be summarsied in a sequential diagram. When you are done, set your work aside, so you can't see it, and try to reproduce it from memory, to see how well it helps you to remember and understand the material.