

CREATING MIND MAPS AS AN EXERCISE TO ART INTERPRETATION

General Objective

The purpose of this practise sheet is to help people understand the existence of mind maps as possible interpretive aids. Mind maps are useful tools that can be applied to different subjects and used for different purposes. We can see mind maps as tools that help us achieve a goal.

In this practical sheet, you will:

- ✓ learn more about mind maps in general;
- ✓ learn how to use mind maps;
- ✓ learn how to apply mind maps to art interpretation, and what it can be useful for.

You will need:

- ✓ a retrospective outlook on your teaching practices;
- ✓ a sheet of paper, a pen, and the desire to get involved creatively.

Challenges and settings

A mind map is a tool for the brain that records the thoughts that are going on in your head. Mind mapping helps you think, gather knowledge, remember, and develop ideas. Most likely, it will make you a better thinker.

Mind maps are created by mimicking the brain's thinking process. Because this technique has been shown to stimulate both hemispheres of the brain, mind mapping is very popular and used in a variety of fields.



Mind maps are versatile and adaptable, so it's entirely up to you to create a mind map that suits your own needs. With this practical sheet, you will understand what a mind map is and how to use it, especially as an art interpretation exercise. We have given a general overview of how you can create your own mind map.

Advantages and disadvantages of mind maps

As every concept, it can have advantages and disadvantages, pros and cons.

- Advantages of mind maps

1. **Engages the mind:** Mind mapping is beneficial because it ignites your mental powers, enabling you to think critically about a core subject matter and how ideas are linked and connected. Mind mapping is an excellent way of developing analytical skills.
2. **Breaks down complex concepts:** Mind maps are great for distilling complex ideas into smaller chunks of information. Because mind maps are keyword-focused and condensed, this helps to simplify concepts and focus on critical points.
3. **Improves memory:** Mind mapping involves identifying a central idea and pinpointing how sub-ideas connect and link to the central idea. These connections are illustrated in a hierarchical nonlinear manner with the use of visuals and color, which enhances the brain's ability to recollect information.
4. **Boosts productivity:** A widely held benefit of mind mapping is that it supercharges and increases productivity, allowing you to make more meaningful use of time. People who use mind maps for studying, note-taking, project management, and presentations often attest that this tool helps them take full control of tasks and stay highly organized and creative.
5. **Easy to review:** Mind maps are structured in a way that a central topic is connected to several related sub-ideas using branches. This approach

makes it easy to scan and get a quick overview of a mind map. Unlike traditional linear note-taking where you have to read line by line, you can easily scan a mind map, identify the central and sub-keywords to know the focus of a mind map.

- Disadvantages of mind maps
 1. **Cause confusion:** Mind maps involves identifying meaningful connections between ideas and concepts. A lot of ideas can be generated when mind mapping, and if one does not take charge of the process, this can lead to an unduly large and populated mind map. Reading such poorly constructed mind maps can be very confusing.
 2. **Time consuming:** This usually applies to people who are new to mind mapping. When creating a mind map for the first time, it can take effort and gulp up time when you are brainstorming and trying to come up with associations between ideas. However, over time as you mind map, you get the hang of things and draw up mind maps in less time.
 3. **Space limitation:** This usually applies to mind maps manually drawn on paper. As you try to generate more connections to the central point of a mind map, more branches and sub-branches are created and the map becomes longer. It can take up a whole lot of space if you're using A4 paper and drawing by hand. However, with mind mapping software, you can take charge of the diagram and canvas.

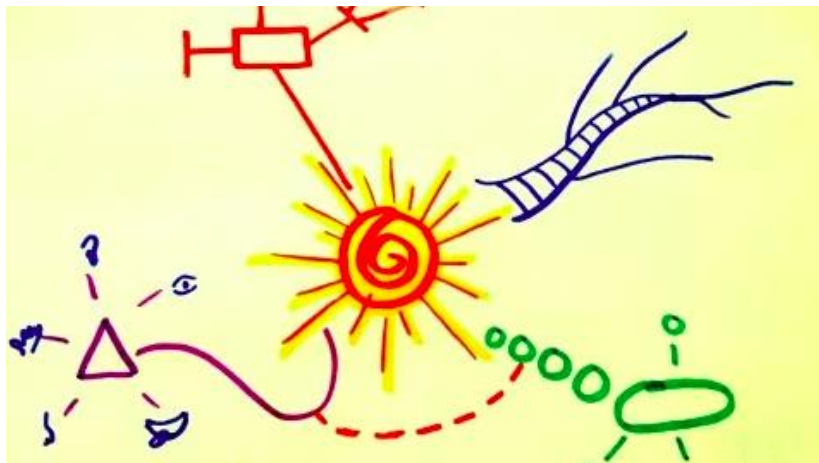
Adaptation

How can mind maps help you explore a concept?

When you have a new idea or want to explore a concept (in art, for example) in more depth, a mind map is usually the best way to finish a thought and create order.

These pictorial methods for recording knowledge and modeling systems have a long history in learning, brainstorming, memory, visual thinking, and problem solving by educators, engineers, psychologists, and others. Some of the earliest

examples of such graphic recording were developed by Porphyry of Tyros, a noted 3rd century thinker, when he graphically visualized Aristotle's conceptual categories.



Source: *Radiant Thinking: Mind Map Your Way to Success & Empowerment*, by Brenton Harris, CourseMarks.¹

A mind map is a useful organizational technique that involves creating a visual diagram to capture and structure information, ideas, or concepts.

Think of a mind map as a more interesting way of brainstorming an idea. Rather than the traditional method of taking notes to generate and organize ideas, a mind map is a graphical method of laying out ideas and organizing information in an easy-to-recall manner.

A mind map is hierarchical and shows relationships among pieces of the whole. It is often created around a single concept, drawn as an image in the center of a blank page, to which associated representations of ideas such as images, words and parts of words are added. Mind maps differ from concept maps in that mind maps are based on a radial hierarchy (tree structure) denoting relationships with a central concept.

When creating a mind map, keep in mind the key elements that make for an effective mind map. These elements are as follows:

¹ <https://coursemarks.com/course/radiant-thinking-mind-map-your-way-to-success-empowerment/>

- A **main/central idea**: This is the core reason for a mind map. The central idea represents the main subject you want to focus on when creating a mind map.
- **Branches**: These are the sub-ideas or information that emanate from the central idea. Branches are usually ordered in different levels. Sub-ideas that directly branch out from the central idea are known as first-level associations. More branches are created to capture information and add more details.
- **Keywords**: In mind maps, information is simplified, condensed, and captured in keywords. The keywords represent the idea behind each branch in the mind map.
- **Color**: Each connection in a mind map is represented with a related color and this enables easy memory recollection.
- **Images**: Visual elements and images are used to illustrate connections in a mind map.

How to draw a mind map?

First of all, you can decide if you want to draw on paper or go digital.

Second, you have to figure out the central idea, the subject of your mind map. Why are you creating a mind map? Answering this question will help you come up with the central idea of the mind map you want to draw. Once you have determined the central idea, right in the middle of your drawing canvas, draw an image to represent the central idea of your mind map. Also, in the middle of the canvas, write the keyword that best describes the central idea.

Next, you have to determine the main sub-ideas that directly impact the central idea/concept. They are called “first-level connections”. These are the ideas/concepts that are directly connected to the central idea.

Then, you have to draw more connections. Analyze the first-level connections and come up with sub-ideas that can be derived from each of the first-level branches. These new branches are the second-level connections, and they



stem from each of the main branches. Represent the second-level branches with different colors, appropriate images and keywords.

Mind maps for art interpretation:

Since it is designed for the art interpretation, pictures or cuttings from paintings can be used instead of words.

Mind maps can be fundamental as exercise for art interpretation: it can be used to stimulate creativity, brainstorming, organization, prioritizing, memory recall and problem solving. Interpretation in art refers to the attribution of meaning to a work, and it can be complicated and confusing when using only line words. This is why mind mapping can be a decisive tool to overcome these problems. Now you can try to create your own mind map: an interesting exercise to do is to take a picture, a painting, a work of art at your leisure, and start an exercise of mind mapping. You just need a pen, colored pencils and a large sheet of paper. You need at least 1½ hours, to follow the creative process without pressure. In the end, you will have a conceptual map which can help you to better visualize and interpret artworks.

Practical examples and inspiration

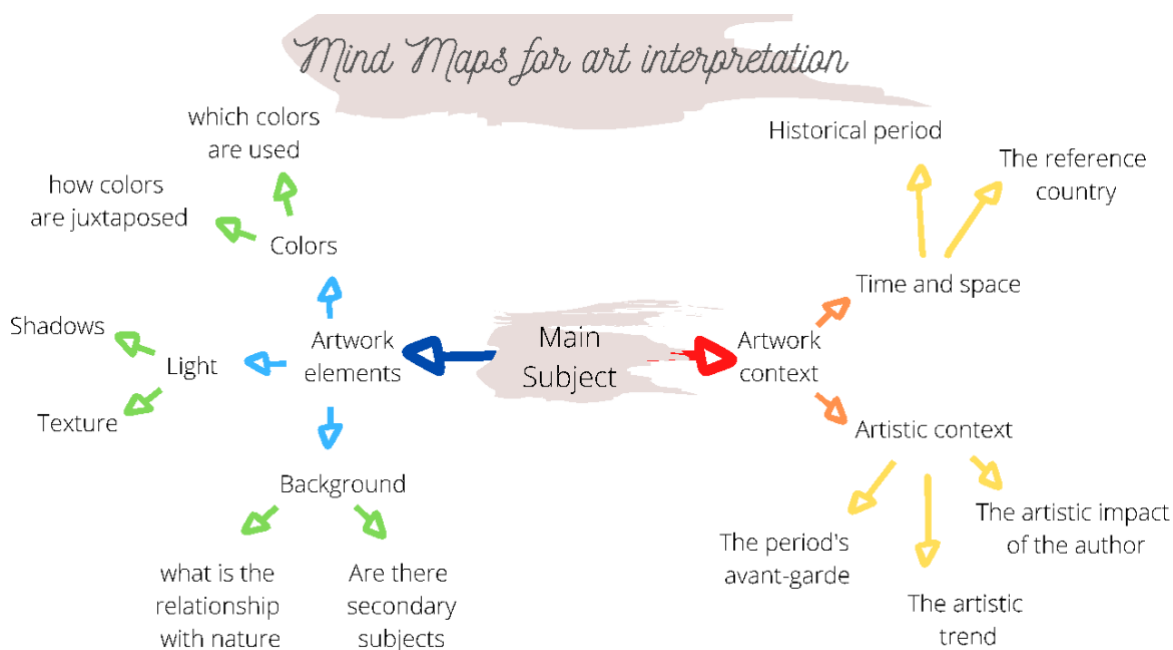
The best way to learn and get the hang of mind maps is to try your hand at making them. If you ask Tony Buzan, who was an English author and educational consultant popularizing the technique of mind mapping, he will point out that the Radiant Thinking model takes on the natural architecture of a human brain. It invokes both the left and right brain. Well, using a model that closely resembles a natural architecture can enhance your mental performance dramatically.

First activity:

Now we will see together how a mind map for art interpretation could look like. This activity can be done on your own.

Observe the work of art of your choice. What do you see? What is the subject? It is usually something in the foreground, or central or eye-catching. This will be your central idea. Interpretation is something more than description, which involves explaining why certain elements exist in a work, what values they serve, etc. but it can be useful to start with the description and move on to interpretation. So, in order to find our first-level connections, we have to observe the artwork and simply starting from our subject, set off lines to other concepts, which will be general aspects that go to make up the works of art; something specific to artworks, namely, colors, light, other secondary subjects, the background; then something to help us interpret the work by situating it in space and time, i.e. the historical period, the place, the artistic current and the author's role of the period.

Here is an example of what it might look like, do not hesitate to put colors, drawings, and details of the picture.



Try to complete with what you see and interpret art with mind maps!

Second activity:

Another exercise proposed is something to do in group or at least with two participants.



Two teams are created. One team draws a mind map from a work of art, then shows it to the other team, without telling the frame of reference. The second team has a time limit within which they must discover the reference work of mind maps. To do so, they can ask questions to the other team which can only be answered "yes" or "no".

They win, if they discover the work from which the mind map was created. Somehow, in this way the first team also wins because it means that it has created a comprehensible and effective mind map.

Additional resources

There is much science behind creating a mind map. To learn more, you need to pick the brains of Tony Buzan. Tony Buzan is the inventor of Mind Maps and one of the world's leading authorities on the brain and learning. *"It is in these shimmering and incessant embraces that the infinite patterns, the infinite Maps of your Mind, are created, nurtured and grown. Radiant Thinking reflects your internal structure and processes. The Mind Map is your external mirror of your own Radiant Thinking and allows you access into this vast thinking powerhouse."*

— Tony and Barry Buzan, (January 31, 2022). Retrieved from: [The Mind Map Book: How to Use Radiant Thinking to Maximize Your Brain's Untapped Potential](#)

Here are some sites where you can try making your own mind maps digitally:

- <https://miro.com/mind-map/>
- https://workspace.google.com/marketplace/app/mind_maps/105279339696?hl=it
- <https://www.mindmup.com/>

