

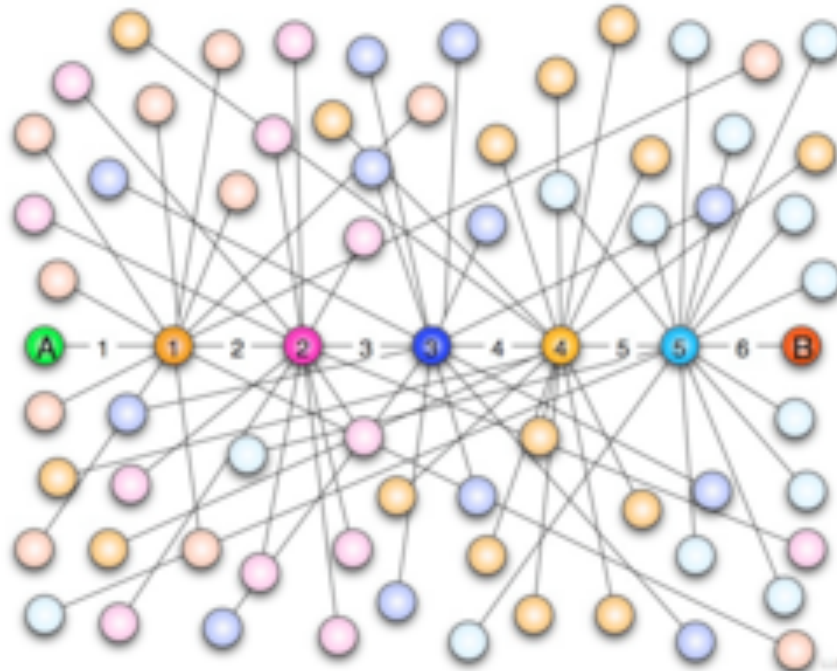
Handout 4: Six Degrees of Separation: Academic Vocabulary Game*

Goal of our academic vocabulary game:

Create a web where you are able to connect one term to another term in six or fewer steps. The two terms to be connected are decided by your teacher.

Where did the “six degrees of separation” idea come from originally?

Six degrees of separation (also referred to as the "Human Web") refers to the idea that, if a person is one step away from each person they know and two steps away from each person who is known by one of the people they know, then everyone is at most six steps away from any other person on Earth. It was popularized by a play written by John Guare... Michael Gurevich conducted seminal work in his empirical study of the structure of social networks in his 1961 Massachusetts Institute of Technology PhD dissertation under [the title] *Itihel de Sola Pool*. (Source: Wikipedia, 2009)



*Source: K.S. Cooter & R.B. Cooter. (in press). *Urban Literacy Education: Helping City Kids in Regular and Special Education Classrooms*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice-Hall/Pearson.

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Example:

Tennessee Grade Level Expectations (7th Grade)

ALL CORE SUBJECT AREAS

GLE 0701.6.1 Comprehend and summarize the main ideas and supporting details of informational texts.

Checks for Understanding (Formative/Summative Assessments)

0701.6.1 Use previously learned strategies to comprehend informational texts (e.g., formulating questions *before, during, and after reading*; visualize, predict, identify the writer's purpose).

0701.6.3 *Recognize clear, but subtly stated relationships among ideas* (e.g., cause-effect, comparative, sequential) in informational texts.

Social Studies Curriculum Standards – Seventh Grade: Culture

Content Standard: 1.0

Culture encompasses similarities and differences among people including their beliefs, knowledge, changes, values, and traditions. Students will explore these elements of society to develop an appreciation and respect for the variety of human cultures.

Learning Expectations:

1.01 Understand the nature and complexity of culture.

A 7th grade social studies teacher says,

“We are learning about how cultures in the United States have differences, but are also connected.

“I would like for each of you in your teams to *first, draw a concept map* that begins with **Memphis, Tennessee, at its center**, and then somehow find a connection to **Missoula**, Montana. I have included at each table the steps you can use to construct your concept map.

“At each of your tables I have given you copies a book titled, *Missoula, Montana: Communities and their Locations*, from our **National Geographic** collection to help you learn more about this American city.

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“When your team finishes your concept map and everyone agrees it is ready, then you will post your concept map on the wall for our Gallery Walk.

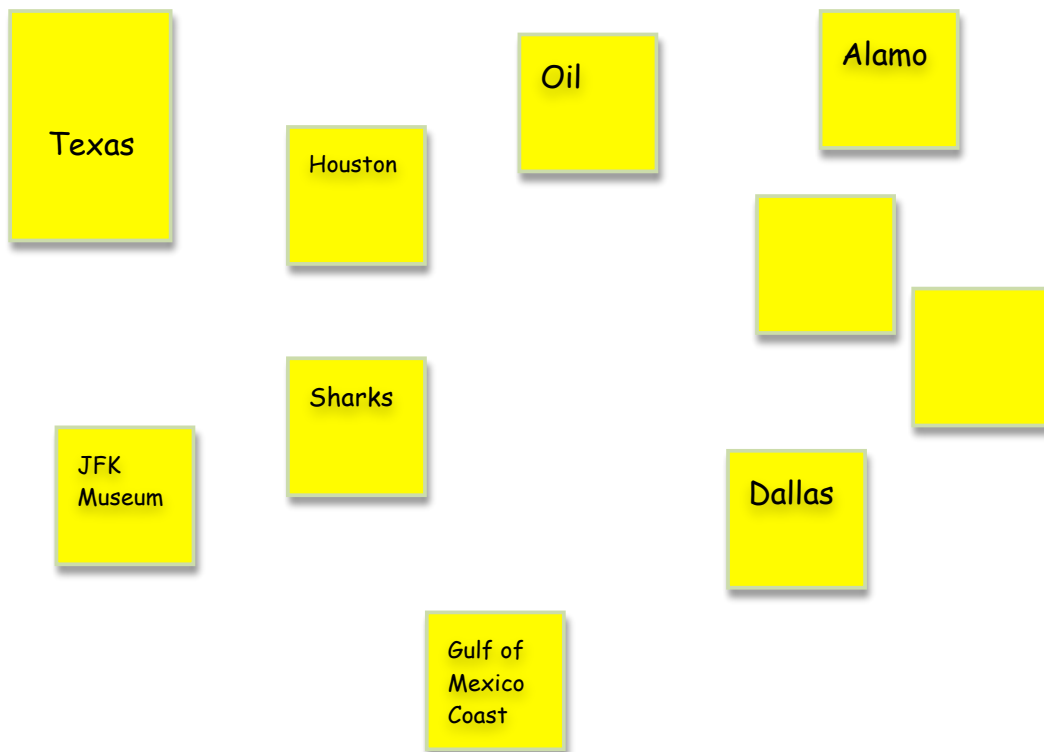
“To win this game, we must all agree as a class that your team had the fewest **COMPLEX connections** (for example: culture, industry, geography) which get them from A to B, not simple ones (non-examples: street names, people names, simple geography like ‘trees’).

“Each person in our class has a yellow sticky-note and will place it on the one they vote for as the winner – you cannot vote for your own.

“Let me show you an example of a completed **concept map** with complex connections, and an example of a poor one. See if you can see why the first one is a good example, and why the second one is a poor example. I would like to know your thinking, so jot down your thoughts on a piece of paper for our discussion. The two terms to connect were **Texas** and **shark**.”

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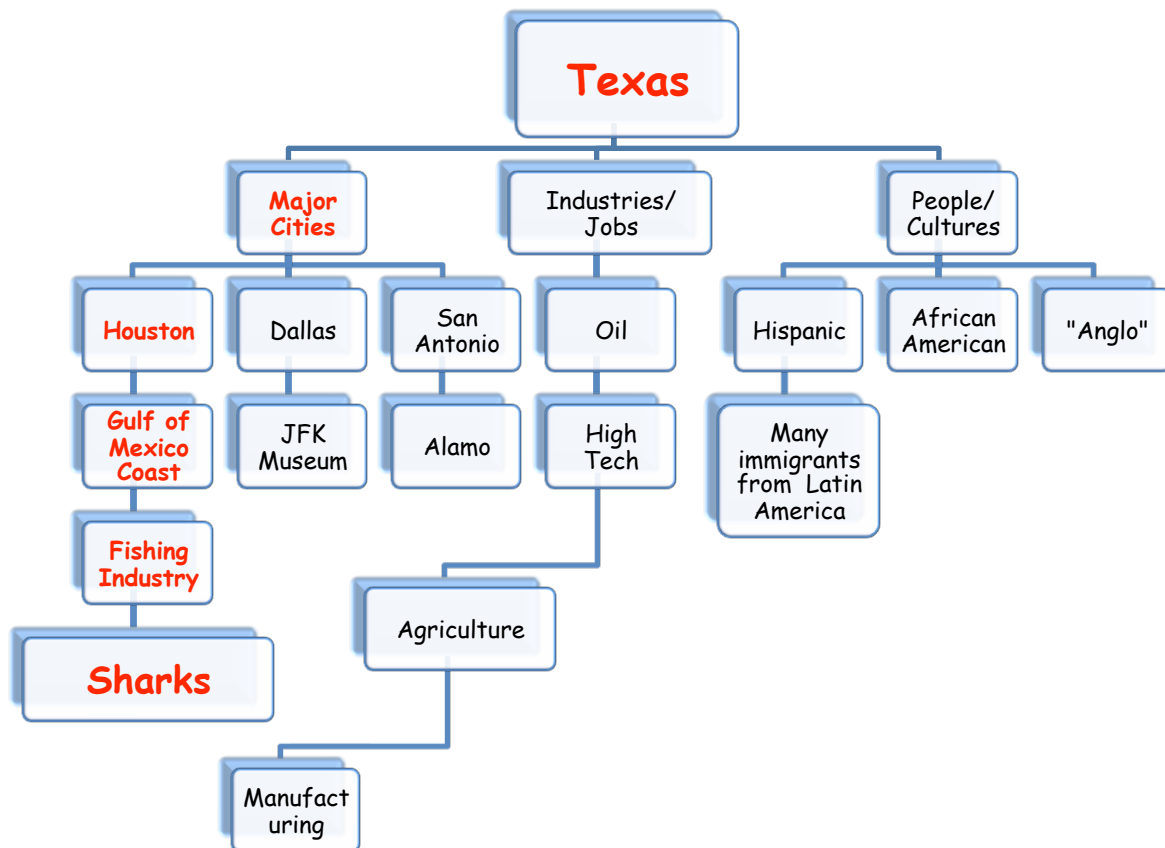
Figure 1: Early BRAINSTORMING PHASE – Connecting the Terms “Texas” and “Sharks”



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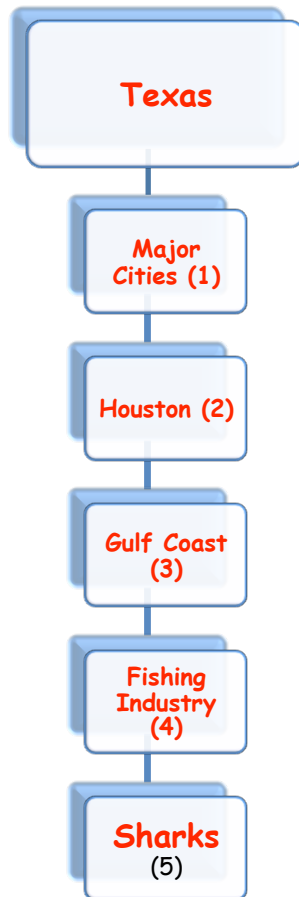
Figure 2: ORGANIZATION PHASE- A Simple “Spider” Concept Map (6 steps or less path from “Texas” to Sharks” noted in red)



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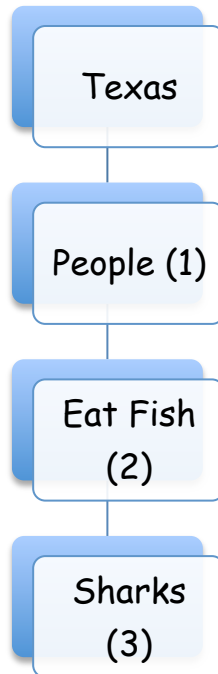
Figure 3: Final Concept Map: A quality example: Connecting “Texas” and “Sharks” in 5 Steps



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Figure 4: Hierarchical Concept Map: Connecting “Texas” and “Sharks”
(Poor Example in 3 Steps—NOT Complex Terms)



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