

Social Studies – U.S. Government and the Midterms

Final Web

Greetings, political scientists. Over the past two months, you have gathered *a lot* of information about the American political system and the factors that influenced the midterm elections. You watched a lot of episodes of the *NewsHour*, you shared your research about a current political figure who had a stake in or influenced the elections, you read several articles, you looked at and compared many news sources online, you isolated important information in the *World Book* article about the levels of government, you watched that guy who talked really fast about the bicameral congress, you maybe sang to yourself inside your head while you watched *Schoolhouse Rock* cartoons, and you made about 2000 webs.

Now the time has come to put all of that information together.

To that end, you will be making one more web – a big one – out of all of your notes.

STEPS

□ First step:

Look back over your notes.

If our Big Idea that will occupy the big center container in your web is U.S. Politics and the Midterms, what will your Subtopics be? What patterns do you notice in the material you explored?

There is no right number of Subtopics, but I am interested to see how you will organize all of these separate ideas into one cohesive whole. Again, look for the patterns in the information.

□ Second step:

Look back over the feedback you received from your previous web-making.

What were you doing well that you can hang on to and build upon?

Where do you need to put some attention in order to make steps forward in your web-making abilities?

□ **Third step:**

Read the criteria carefully.

1. Organization

- Hierarchy of size: Big Ideas are big; Subtopics are medium; Important Details are small. Working in this way is purposeful: it helps your brain categorize and therefore hold on to the information.
- Important Details are clustered around the Subtopic they are most closely related to.
- Lines connect Important Details to their related Subtopics.
- Your web is easy to read and make sense of.

2. Connections

- Lines connect related Details to each other (or to other Subtopics) across the web.

This is where the juice is in this exercise. After you have constructed your web, spend just as much time looking for patterns in the information, across the web. Meaning is revealed through searching for and recognizing those patterns. Visualize those connections and patterns by drawing lines.

3. Special Features

- Different types of containers – circles, bubbles, rectangles, boxes, etc.
- Different strengths of lines for connections – thick lines for strong connections, thin or dotted lines for tangential (weaker) connections, etc.
- Color-coding
- Use of symbols and/or pictures to help express ideas and/or cut down on the number of words used
- Key/legend to explain your special features

How can some or all of these things help further categorize your information?

4. **Content**

- Fewest words to capture the information; enough words to capture the information – how do you find the balance (it may be different for each Detail)?
- Clarity of communication – are your ideas easy for you to read and digest?
- Thoroughness

Step Four:

Finalize your thinking about your Subtopics and what special features you will use.

Step Five:

Make your web.

Step Six:

Reread the criteria and the feedback you received on your previous webs.

Have you covered all aspects of the criteria?

Have you done so to the best of your ability (without staying up late)?

Is there anything you want to adjust/add/change/tweak?

Step Seven:

Hand your web in and do something nice for yourself.

The purpose of this exercise is metacognitive: by reworking and sorting the information in your head, rather than just regurgitating it or copying it down and changing a few words, you are creating hooks and latches from the information into your brain, increasing your ability to recall it in the future and deepening your conceptual understanding of the material. We are going beyond facts. Webs are also a powerful study aid: by practicing this now you are adding another strategy to your repertoire, which will hopefully come in handy in the future.

You have one week: get to work!