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 many, many (*many*) episodes of the *NewsHour*, you isolated important information in the *World Book* article about the three levels of U.S. government, you watched that guy who talked really fast about the two chambers of congress, you maybe sang to yourself inside your head while you watched *Schoolhouse Rock* cartoons, you looked at several articles in the *New York Times* and *The Guardian*, you sat on the edge of your seat as you watched the results come in on election day, you wondered (for the 1000th time) why a certain politician is orange, and, if you were an obedient child, you took a lot of notes.

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

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

STEPS

☐ **First step:**

Organize your notes: look through your **binder** and **accordion folder** and bring all Socials related notes and handouts together in one place.

Look through your **comp book**—carefully—and identify where your Socials notes are. Some people use small colored stickie tabs to identify these pages, or they cut regular stickie notes up into small tabs to do the same.

☐ **Second step:**

Get yourself nice and calm and focused and **look back over your notes**. This will take time.

If our Big Idea that will occupy the big center container in your web is U.S. Politics and the 2026 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.

☐ **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 simple to read and make sense of—thought has been given to how you are using space.

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 across the web** to connect related details and ideas.

3. **Special Features**

- Different types of **containers** for the Big Idea, the Sub-topics, and any really important details – circles, bubbles, rectangles, boxes, etc.

- Different **strengths of lines for connections** – thick lines for strong connections, thin or dotted lines for weaker connections, etc.

- Different **fonts**

- **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, but enough words to capture the information – dhow do you find the balance (it may be different for each Detail)? Complex ideas may need to be broken down into connected chains of ideas. Let go of full sentences and instead think in **Key Words**

- **Clarity of communication** – can a viewer clearly understand the ideas you are expressing?

- **Thoroughness**

☐ **Step Four:**

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

☐ **Step Five:**

Filter your notes into your Subtopics. You might do this by having loose sheets of paper, each labeled with one Subtopic, and filtering your notes onto those pages; or you might come up with your own system of doing this.

The purpose of this step is to give you a sense of **how much room you'll need on your web for each Subtopic**. This step will also save you from having to continuously flip through your comp book while you make your web.

☐ **Step Six:**

Make your web.

☐ **Step Seven:**

Reread the criteria.

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 Eight:**

Hand your web in and do something nice for yourself.

The purpose of this exercise is what is called *metacognitive*, which is a fancy word about thinking about how we think: by reworking and sorting the information in your head and then on paper, rather than just vomiting it back out 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 just over one week: get to work!

Due Date: Monday, November 16