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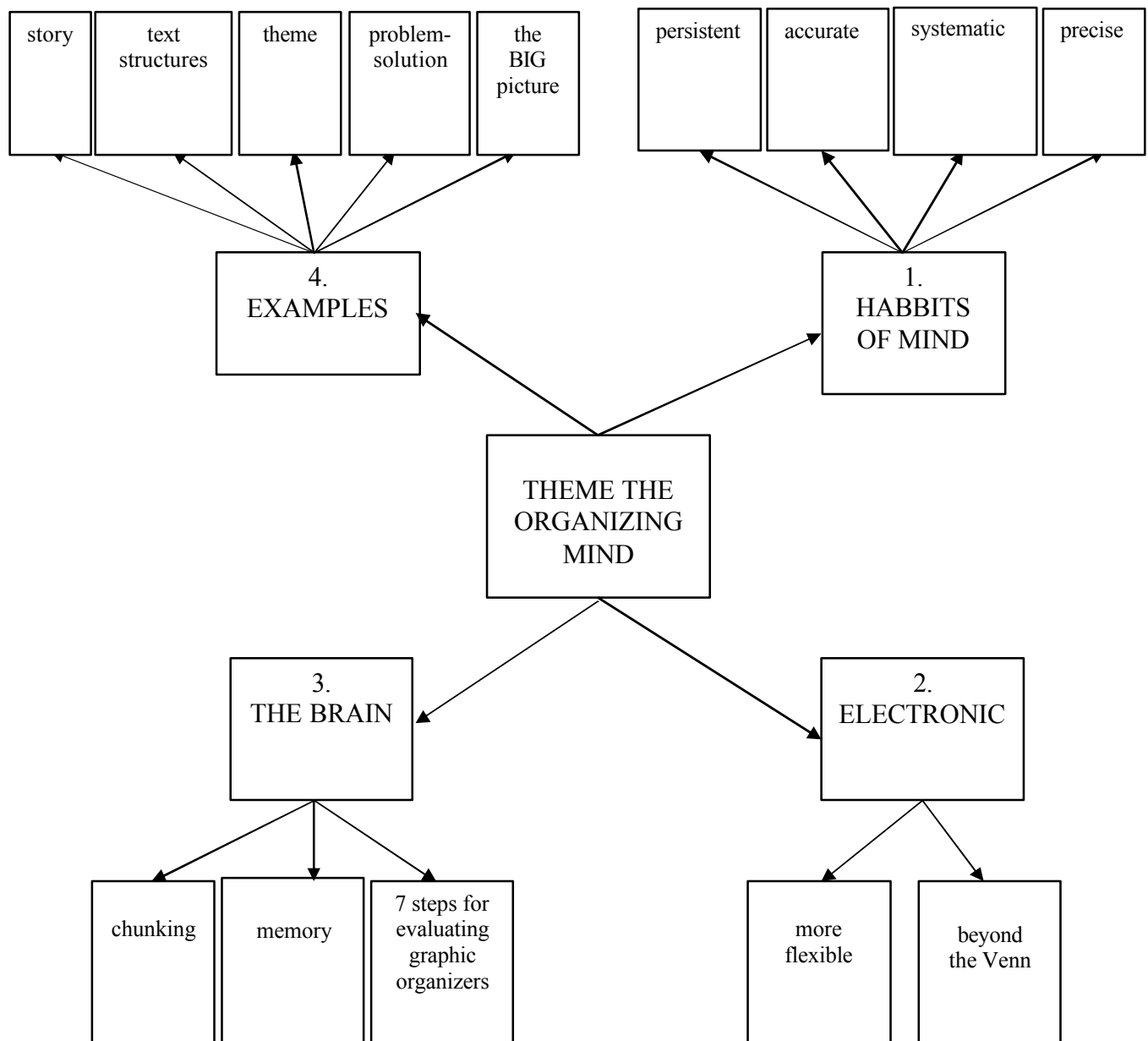
# **The Organized Mind Using Graphic Organizers**

The graphic organizer is a mental tool to  
aid comprehension... not an end in itself.



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## Chapter 4 Overview

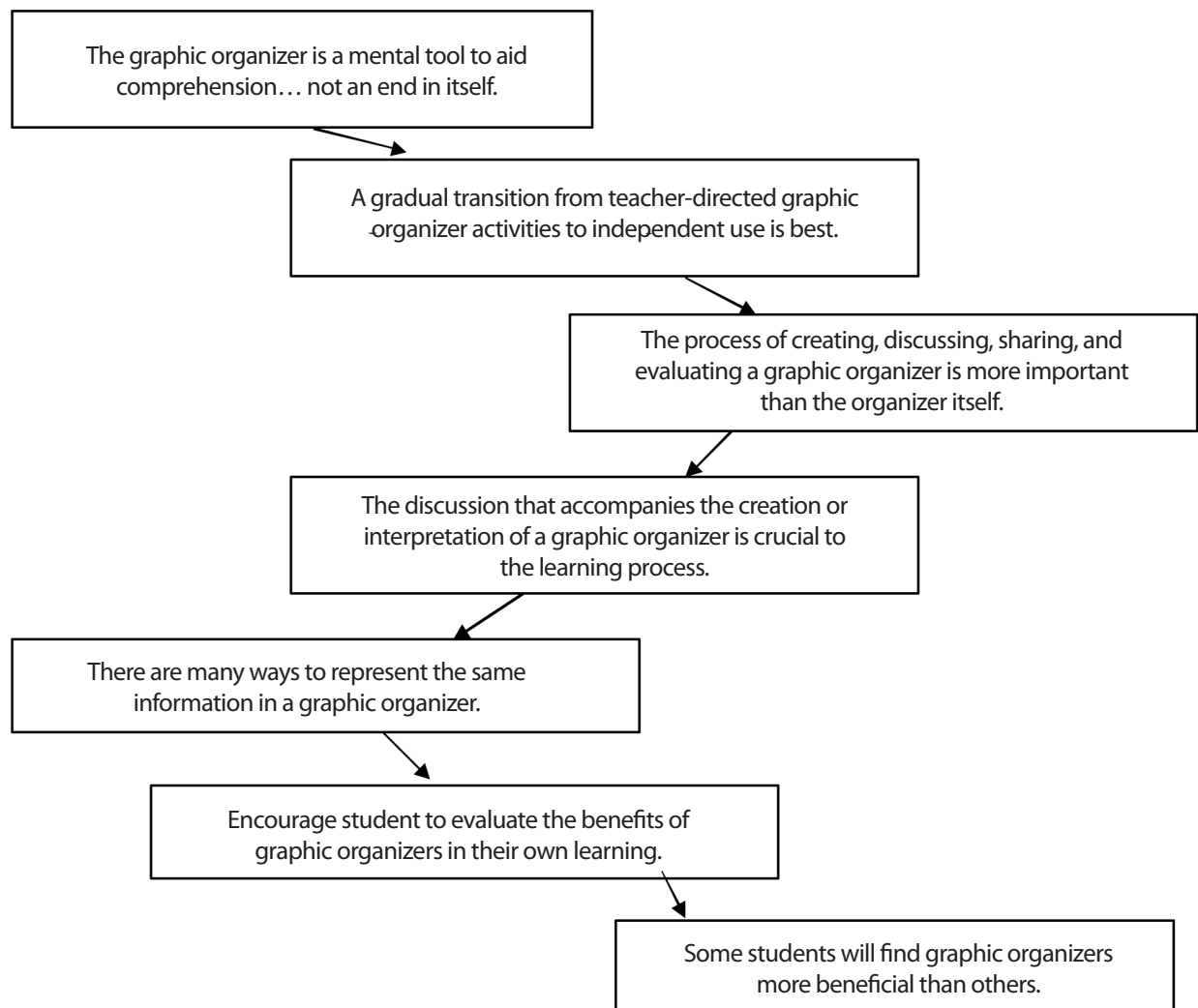


## A Field Guide to Using Visual Tools

Figure 4.2

## Evaluating Graphic Organizers - Seven Steps

The organizing has already been done by the textbook, the teacher, or the computer program. By and large, students are supposed to see the big picture on their own and are rarely given the tools to put it all together other than through a test of their discrete knowledge. The students are asked to “learn” the information in a deductive way: take notes, memorize the information as organized, and give back the information in written or verbal form... in linear form. So where do graphic organizers fit into this discussion? As Greg Freeman mentioned earlier, many of the early and present graphic organizers have been highly structured “advanced organizers.”

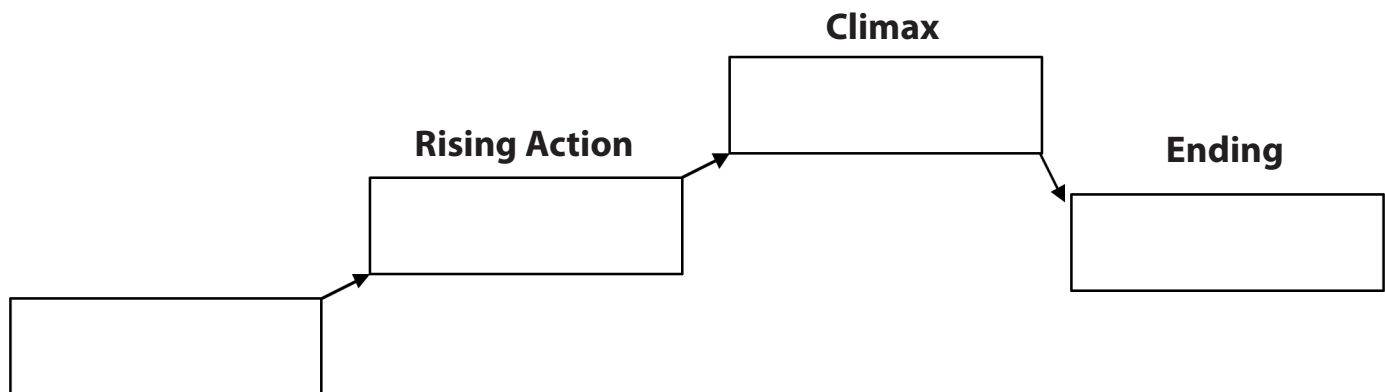


*Adapted from Bromley, K. Irwin-De Vitis, L., & Modlo, M. (1995). Graphic organizers (p. 28). New York: Scholastic*

Figure 2.2

## Introducing a Visual Tool: Task-Specific Organizer - “Rising Action”

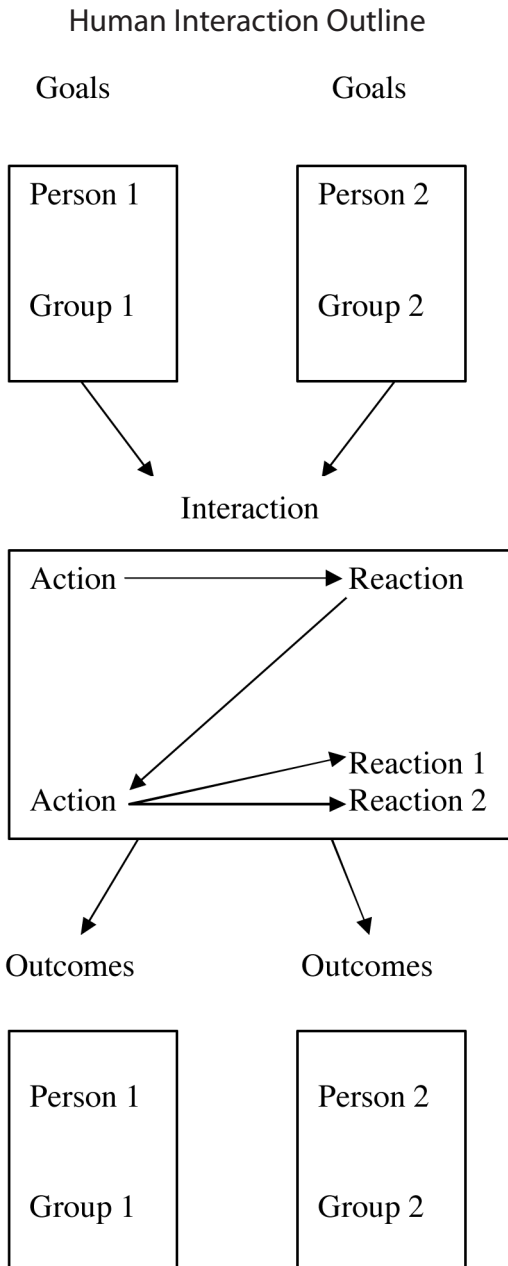
Purpose: Use the “Rising Action” organization for identifying and analyzing the significant events leading up to the climax of a story and ending for denouement).



1. Example: Distribute this completed example of the organizer, using a story students have recently read. Introduce the vocabulary for each box (important events, climax, ending) and state the purpose for using the organizers and how this tool will help students organize the plot of a story in a meaningful way.
2. Modeling: Reading a new story with students, and ask them to think about this organizer as they read. After completion of the story, slowly create the “Rising Action” organizer on the chalkboard without student input. Start with the climax “box,” explaining your interpretation of the climax of the story. (this models your metacognitive processes with the tool.) Then proceed to show and explain the rising action of events and ending. Ask for clarifying questions.
3. Procedures: After completion of the modeling, ask students to create a “Rising Action” organizer on a sheet of paper. Have students draw their own organizers so that they immediately take responsibility for using and owning the tool. Discuss the need for starting at the top, using only rectangles, and linking the literature-based vocabulary to the visual tool. Discuss possible variations, such as adding more boxes, if necessary.
4. Coaching: On the next day, ask students to read a new story and structure students in a “Think-Pair-Share” format for creating a “Rising Action” organizer. As the pairs are constructing the organizers, move around the classroom and coach students as they work. Ask several pairs of students to share their organizers with the class and discuss the different interpretations and how they have used the tool.
5. Practice. Reinforce the use of the organizer with each reading selection. Assign the organizer for homework so that students have time to practice on their own.
6. Reflection: Ask students to discuss the effectiveness of the visual tool and how this tool could be used in other subject areas, such as in history.

Figure 4.1

## Human Interaction Outline



Source: Jones, B.F., J. Pierce, and B. Hunter.  
(December 1988/January 1989). "Teaching  
Students to Construct Graphic Representations."  
*Educational Leadership* 46, 4: 20-25

The flexible organizer is used for investigating any kind of human interaction, but it is often used specifically as a guide for reading in history.

The authors identify several "key frame questions" related to the graphic. Using the relationship between European settlers and Native Americans, a teacher may ask: Who are the persons or groups? What were their goals? Did they conflict or cooperate? What was the outcome for each person or group?

It is important to notice that these are typical teacher questions. But the organizer provides the concrete tool for teachers and students to further organize, analyze, and synthesize information that stretches across dozens of pages, throughout a whole book, or from several sources, including computer databases. The authors describe the implications for students when they use their application other text-structure based organizers for reading comprehension:

Reading with an appropriate graphic structure in mind can help students' select important ideas and details as well as detect missing information and unexplained relations. Moreover, constructing and analyzing a graphic helps students become actively involved in processing a text. Graphics foster nonlinear thinking, unlike prose summaries and linear out-lines (Jones et al. 1988/1989, p.21).

It is essential to recognize the term "constructing," because the authors are elevating the graphic beyond the work of organizing basic information and toward the outcome of creating.

Figure 4.5

## Story Organizer Overview

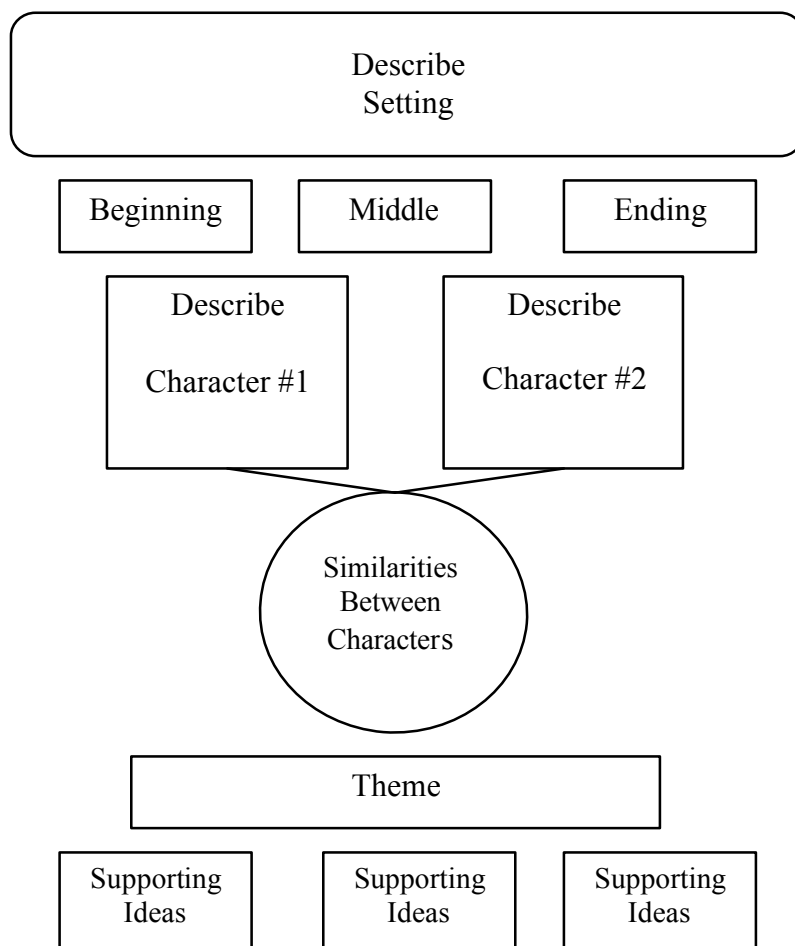
**BACKGROUND:** The story organizer or map is a generic tool used specifically for interpretation of fiction. Other organizers have been developed for analyzing specific tasks for reading a story, such as plot analysis and rising action, and character descriptions, comparison of characters, and for identifying thematic structures. Story organizers such as the one shown below are used to support students in bringing as many of these aspects of the story analysis together on a single page. It reinforces for students that most of these dimensions of the story must be included in the interpretive process for a complete analysis.

## BASIC TECHNIQUES

? Introduce the graphic by telling students that they will later be able to create their own design for a story organizer.

? Model the use of the organizer in front of the class by working through the steps using a story students have already read and discussed.

? Have students work in pairs and then independently until they can draw, expand, and complete the organizer from a blank piece of paper



NOVICE is able to fill in the section of the organizer with guidance from a teacher

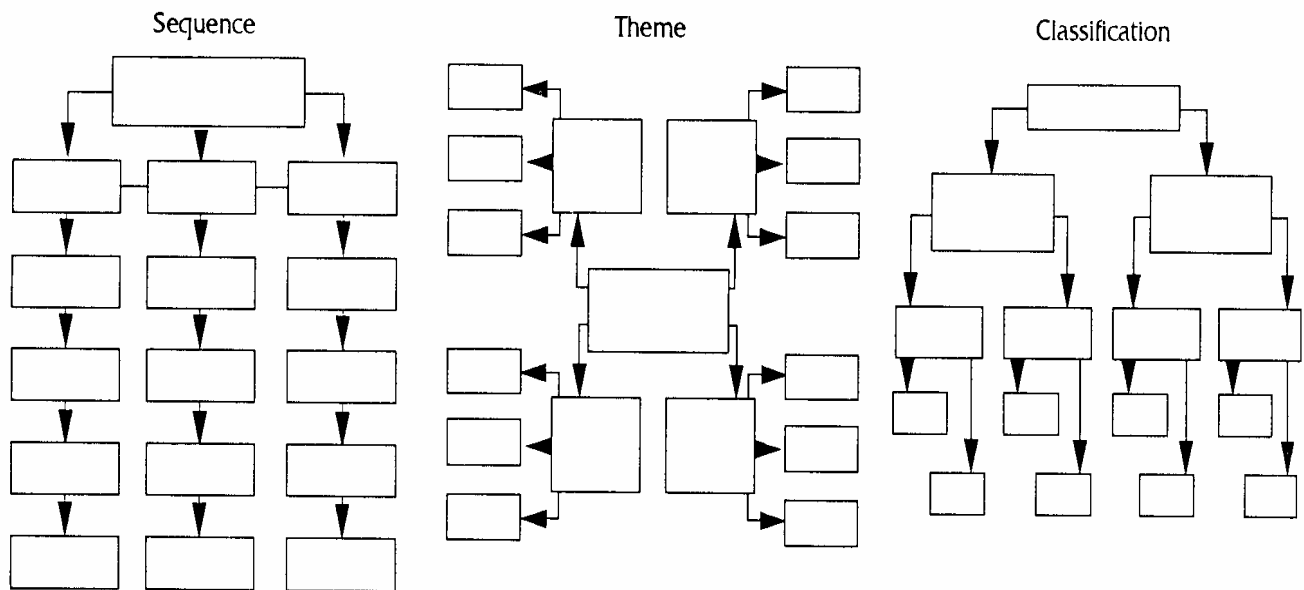
APPRENTICE is able to complete the organizer independently and groups by adding boxes and ovals when necessary

PRACTITIONER is able to draw a similar story organizer from a blank page and use it to write or present a story review.

EXPERT is able to identify and expand the different aspects of the organizer in order to develop a rich interpretation of a story

Figure 4.6

## Generic Semantic Maps



Source: Cronin, HJ., D. Meadows, and R. Sinatra. (September 1990). "Integrating Computers, Reading, and Writing Across the Curriculum. "Education Leadership 48, 1: 57-62.

Notice that the underlying process of sequencing and classification are graphically represented for showing plot and main ideas, respectively. This software and materials package is thus situated in the gray area between task-specific organizers and thinking process maps., and this may be why the approach has had success. Results of reading and writing tests of students using Mac-Mapper software and the accompanying workbooks show that this kind of explicit patterning of information related to content specific needs -- with little possible variance by students in the beginning -- can directly change student performance on task such as identifying the plot and main idea of the

story. Sinatra (a994) and collaborating researchers found that, in general, research points to an obvious need of low - performing readers for effective instruction in both reading and writing:

[Readers] Who are weak in sensing the organizing structure of stories and who lack the strategies for uncovering story relationships have difficulty with recall and comprehension... [And] writers who are taught to organize ideas in writing so that the reader will readily uncover the organizational structure will be better communicators and, therefore better writers (Sinatra 1994).

Figure 4.6

Text Structures for Reading: A nine-Step Process for Integrating Reading, Writing, and Computer Use.

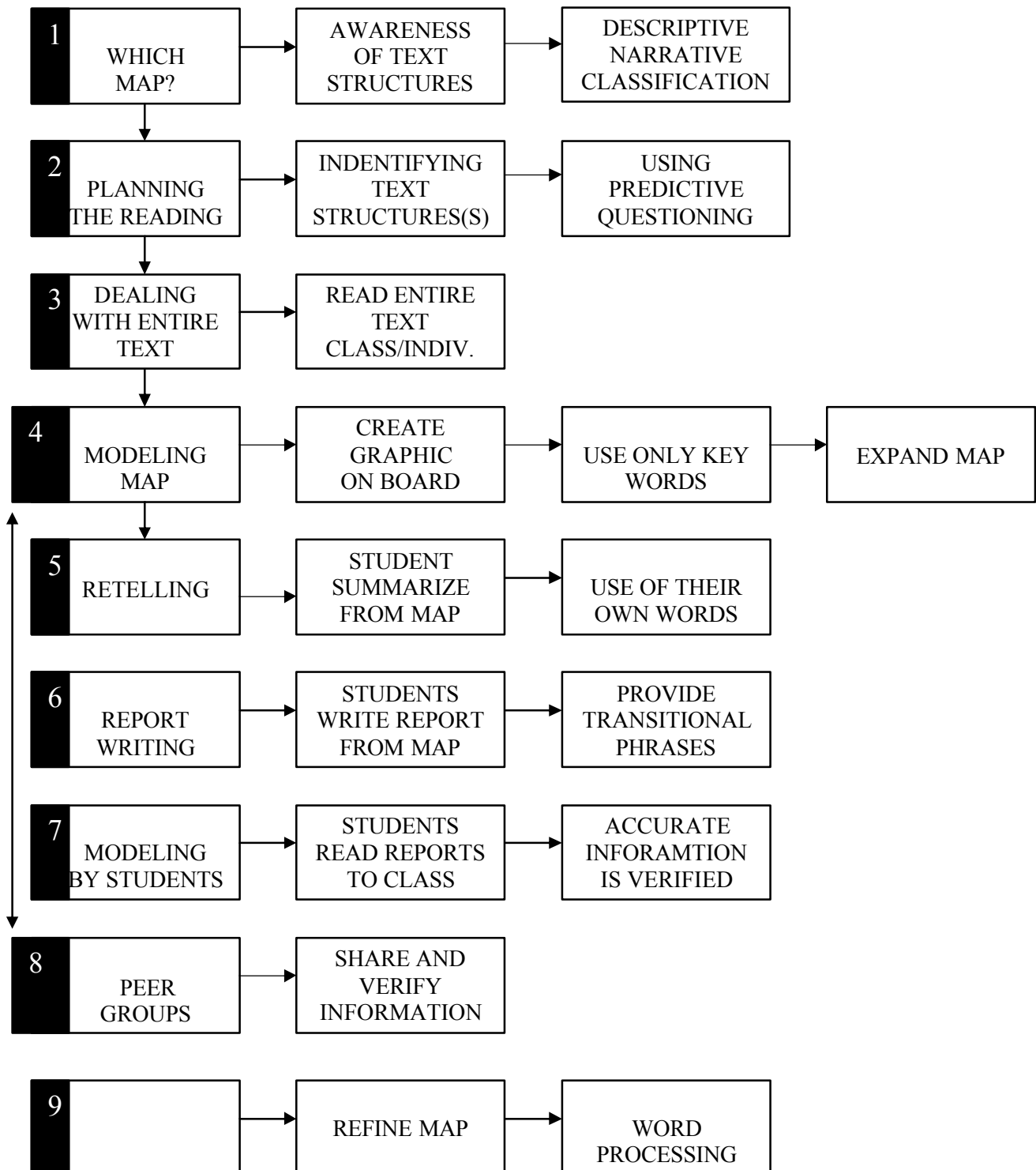




Figure 4.9

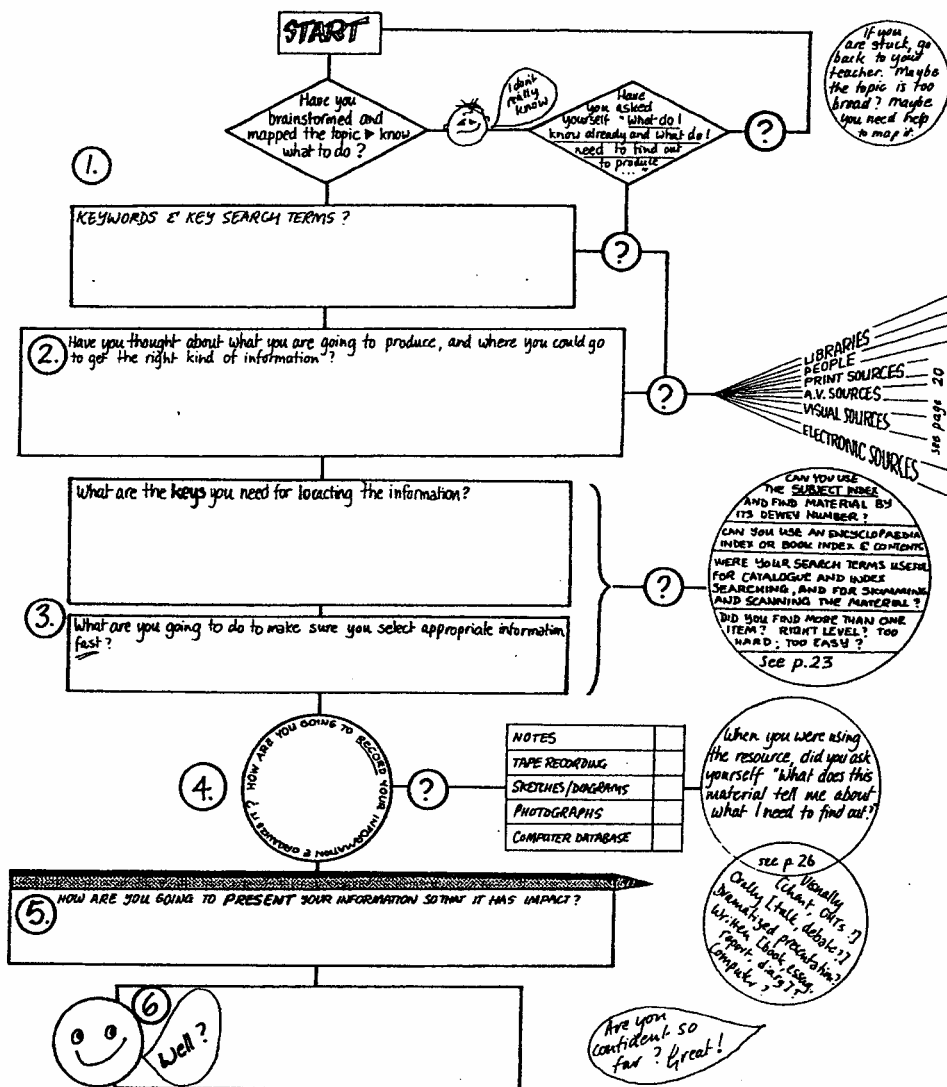
## Pathfinder Research Template

## Research Template

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

(Compile your own PATHFINDER to guide you)



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Figure 4.3

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### Seven Warning Signs That Graphics Aren't Working

