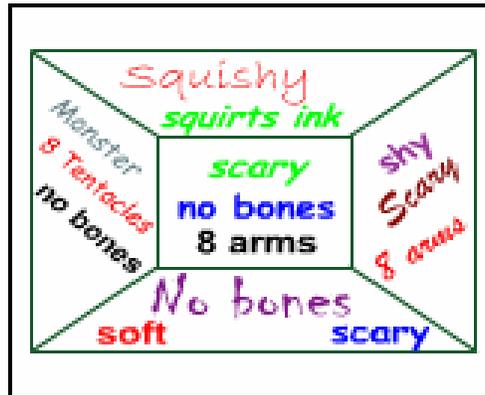


Place Mat

Overview

This cooperative learning strategy allows students to think about, record, and share their ideas in groups. Each group member writes ideas in a space around the centre of a large piece of paper. Afterwards, the group compares what each member has written, and common items are compiled in the centre of the paper.



Steps

1. Assign a topic.
2. Form groups of up to four members.
3. Give each group a piece of chart paper and each student a pen or pencil.
4. Divide the paper into parts based on the number of members in the group, and leave a central square or circle.
5. Have students write their ideas about the assigned topic in the designated spaces. After sharing their ideas, they write common ideas in the centre of the paper.

Hints and Management Ideas

- *Inform students* that they should be prepared to share their responses.
- *Encourage* independent thinking as well as group sharing.
- *Monitor the discussions* for common confusions that can be addressed later with the whole group.

Benefits of Place Mat

- When students have appropriate “think time”, the quality of their responses improves.
- Students are actively engaged in the thinking, and independent thinking is encouraged.
- More critical thinking is retained from a lesson in which students have had an opportunity to discuss and reflect on the topic.
- Many students find it safer or easier to enter into a discussion with a smaller group.
- It is important for students to learn how to build on the ideas of others, combine common thoughts, and write them down as a group.

For more detailed information, refer to Bennett, B. and C. Rolheiser. *Beyond Monet: The Artful Science of Instructional Integration*. Toronto, Ontario: Bookation, 2001.